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STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE EAST BAY



Graphic by Becky Johnson

Love, Pregnancy and Homelessness

by Becky Johnson

Tama and Gideon have been attending the vigil at Santa Cruz City Hall to end the sleeping ban for nearly three months. Gideon, a former sushi cook, is actively seeking employment in his field. Tama, while excited about her new family member's arrival, and the joy both she and Gideon will feel when the baby is born, is not oblivious to her current circumstances. Both she and Gideon are homeless. "It is very stressful to be sleeping in Santa Cruz, and homeless, and pregnant."

Local authorities in county government agencies and with the courts clearly threaten any pregnant, homeless woman. While it has been proven to be insufficient cause alone to remove a natural child from its parent simply because they are homeless, it nonetheless happens, and in Santa Cruz County, it happens often.

Both Tama and Gideon, who have participated in the City Hall Sleepers Protest to urge the City of Santa Cruz to end the cruel sleeping ban, now must find housing, and the sooner the better. Both so Tama can rest and properly prepare for her

See **Love and Homelessness** *page ten*

Santa Cruz 'Sleep Protest' Faces New Police Attacks

by Robert Norse

The City of Santa Cruz has lost or deliberately eliminated sleeping spaces for homeless people over the last several months, and now has stepped up its enforcement of repressive anti-sleeping laws against its unsheltered citizens.

On August 31, Holy Cross Church announced it was closing its 40-person indoor pavilion, the last drop-in area for Santa Cruz's homeless people to sleep legally at night, in fact the last area of *any* size open to the poor at night. In early July, Mayor Mike Rotkin had shut down the Holy Cross Church outdoor field, which served twice as many.

Father Mike Marini, parish priest at Holy Cross, had allowed homeless people to sleep in sleeping bags in the church's field, even hiring security guards to ensure safety. After Mayor Rotkin heard *one* complaint from *one* neighbor, he informed Fr. Marini that he was in violation of the camping ban law and that the church had "no other option but to obey the law."

In March, the 150-space armory had closed. And last December, the Coral St. Open Air Shelter, which served 200-300 at its peak, was eliminated to provide "building room" for a $1.3 million trailer project run by the Citizens Committee for the Homeless, a Fundraisers-R-Us-style group of poverty pimps (who then proceeded to keep the site vacant and locked off for the last nine months).

On August 30, Municipal Court Judge Tom Kelly upheld the Santa Cruz City Sleeping Ban, a law that makes two acts of sleeping outside within 48 hours a misdemeanor crime punishable by up to six months in jail and/or $1000 fine. Judge Kelly's repressive decree means hundreds now face $162 infraction tickets for their first act of sleeping or covering up with blankets after 11 p.m. within the city limits, and jail for a second violation. Several hundred infraction ticket cases and half a dozen misdemeanor sleep-crimes will now go to trial.

On September 7, two new activists were arrested for misdemeanor sleep-crimes. Santa Cruz police increased their confiscations of property, with political displays, clothing, bedding and literature hauled away in two sweeps — much of it still in police custody along with 60-100 blankets.

On September 10, in plain view of cable television cameras, seven activists chained themselves to the podium and pews of the City Council chambers during the evening City Council meeting. As 40 supporters shouted "Homes Not Jails" and "We Demand the Right to Sleep at Night", Mayor Rotkin ordered police to clear the chambers, except for the anti-homeless smear-artist reporter from the *Santa Cruz Sentinel,* Karen Clark.

Local labor activist David Minton Silva was thrown into a cement pillar several minutes after presenting 1800 signatures to *the City Council demanding an end to the* camping ban. Police Sgt. Andy Craine locked out many members of the public, including this writer. Craine is the same cop who threw the HIV-positive Silva out and sent him to the hospital. *Sentinel* reporter Clark was a witness to Craine's assault on Silva but declined to report it.

Four of the seven activists were held in jail for three days in what appeared to be gratuitous and punitive incarceration. All were charged with trespass and disrupting a public meeting. They face up to a $2000 fine and one year in jail if convicted. The *San Jose Mercury News* declined to discuss the Sleeping Ban issue, instead smearing the activists as "in-your-face" exhibitionists.

See **Santa Cruz Arrests** *page ten*

Mobilizing the Vote for Justice

Homeless groups organize to get out the vote in Oakland and Berkeley

by George Franklin

East Bay groups serving homeless and low-income citizens have mounted a major voter-registration and get-out-the-vote effort for the November elections.

Emergency Services Network (ESN), the Berkeley Ecumenical Chaplaincy to the Homeless, and Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS) have joined in an outreach effort that has targeted senior centers, homeless service centers and on-the-street populations in an attempt to increase participation in the upcoming elections.

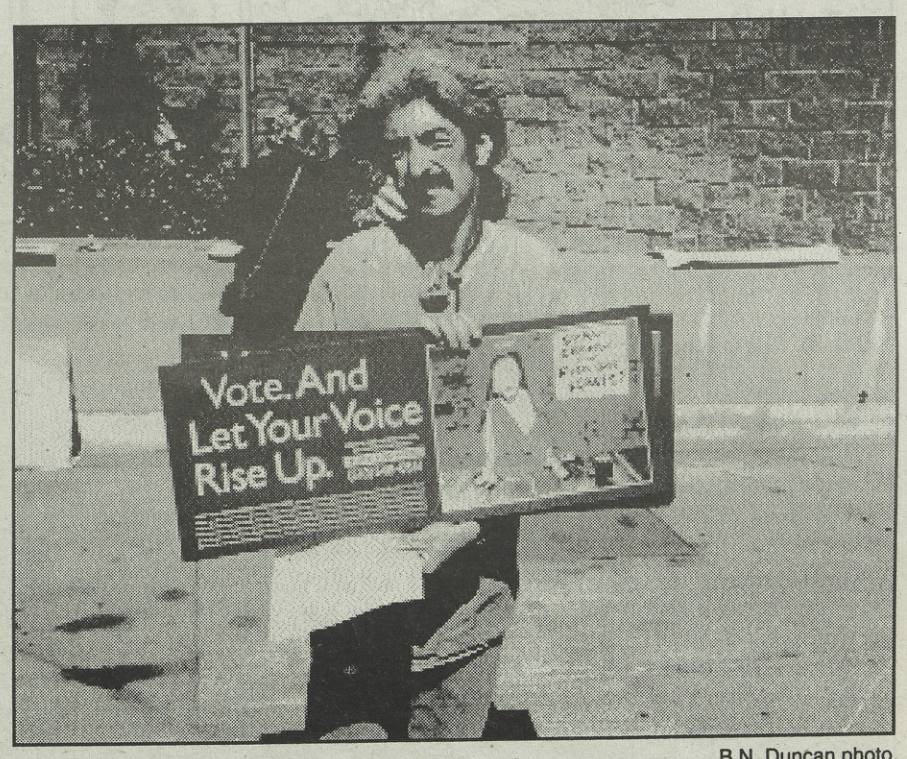
James Thomas, Public Policy Director at ESN, described the group's efforts over recent weeks. "We did in-house presentations in shelters in the evenings focusing on welfare reform and the county efforts to cut General Assistance," he said. "We used this as a backdrop for people needing to get involved and register to vote."

The presentations covered local issues, then moved on to statewide initiatives affecting health care, taxation and the minimum wage. Thomas said, "Basically, we talked about issues related to clients" at senior centers and homeless service sites.

In late September, ESN cosponsored a register-to-vote party at St. Mary's Senior Center in Oakland, bringing in two candidates for the city council seat in that district to meet with homeless and low-income seniors. ESN also targeted Old Man's Park, a downtown site where many homeless and low-income residents congregate each day.

In Berkeley, efforts have focused on sites offering meals and shelter programs. "We're going out to those areas and gathering people to register to vote," said Thomas. "Then

See **Mobilizing the Homeless Vote** *page nine*



B.N. Duncan photo

"Vote and Let Your Voice Rise Up." **Jesus Lopez takes part in a campaign to register low-income East Bay residents to vote.**

Caltrans Loses a 'David and Goliath' Struggle

For the residents of Guadalupe Parkway, who "hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope," fighting the good fight has meant the difference between hope and homelessness.

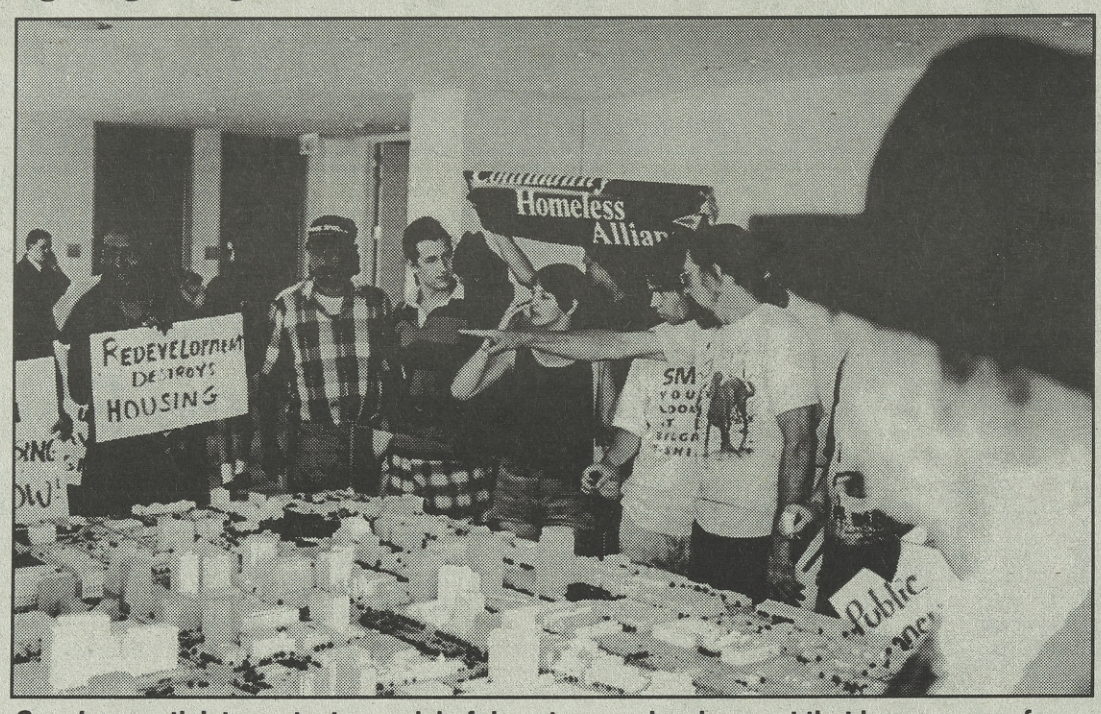
by Scott Wagers

Tenacious residents of the Guadalupe Neighborhood have won yet another victory in their David and Goliath struggle to keep their housing.

If Caltrans and members of the San Jose City Council had their way, low-income tenants who live along the Guadalupe Parkway would have been out of their housing in early June and an empty dirt lot would be all that is left of their neighborhood and homes — homes which are now still occupied by those Caltrans tried and failed to evict.

The San Jose City Council, led by Councilman David Pandori, voted to support Caltrans' attempts to evict the 10 families left in the path of the last leg of the Highway 87 project. At a hearing on September 19, a judge ruled that the tenants should be allowed to stay because there is not comparable housing available in Santa Clara County and that the residents were in real danger of becoming homeless. Caltrans argued that they owe their clients nothing because the tenants "knew what they were getting into" when they signed their leases.

Public-interest lawyers representing the neighborhood also cited a state law that requires agencies to replace low-income housing that is destroyed or to find comparable housing for those being relocated. Not only had Caltrans refused to build replacement housing, but Santa Clara County has seen an unprecedented increase in rental and housing costs in the last several years. In fact, studio apartments are being rented for more than $1,100 a month and the median cost of a one-bedroom apartment is $750 a month.



San Jose **activists protest a model of downtown redevelopment that has no room for poor and homeless people.**

Attorney Amanda Wilson stated the dilemma in simple terms to the *San Jose Mercury News:* "The state should not have a hand in making people homeless."

While the rich and powerful casually decide which area of San Jose to gentrify next, the process of "removing blight" wiped out 1,200 units of truly affordable housing irrevocably.

Judge Leahy agreed and decided that the tenants' case warranted a trial which is set to begin in two months. For the residents of Guadalupe Parkway, who "hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope", fighting the good fight has meant the difference between hope and homelessness. Their plight reminds us that though we face formidable opposition in our struggle, the only way we can be truly defeated is to abandon hope.

In related developments, people awaiting Section 8 vouchers from the Santa Clara County Housing Authority (the list is 10,000 people long and has been closed for several years) are now being told to consider moving out of Santa Clara County. One Community Homeless Alliance member who has been awaiting housing since 1988 was told he should consider moving to Modesto because it is unlikely that he would find housing in Santa Clara County.

Such utterances ring in the ears of poor people in San Jose with piercing familiarity. For those with substantial incomes, finding housing in San Jose has become increasingly difficult; for those on the economic margins, the search for housing seems to be a long, dark corridor with no exit signs.

A recent study concluded that 94% of the homeless surveyed in the county report that Santa Clara County was their last place of residency. Thus, people who grew up in San Jose are being forced to flee it in search of housing. While income disparities in America continue to grow, cities like San Jose are doing little to remedy the situation. In fact, San Jose seems set on following the logic of greed to its natural conclusion.

The city continues to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into an ambitious urban renewal plan. Time and again, developers and city leaders throughout America buy into the trickle-down myth, spending tax dollars to bail out bankrupt hotels and shopping malls (like San Jose's own Fairmont and the Pavilion Shops). The notion that, if we just build enough luxury hotels, sports arenas and shopping malls everyone will benefit, is tragically flawed.

It's not only the poor who are disillusioned. Historically, small businesses in downtown San Jose have attracted customers and are the cornerstone of a thriving city. But now, these small businesses-as well as the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels that once housed those now homeless have been decimated by the Redevelopment machine.

Some family-owned businesses that had been located downtown for more than 50 years were gobbled up by greedy developers looking to "gentrify" blighted areas. While the family-owned businesses were forced out, the Redevelopment Agency gave several million dollars to IBM to help the corporate giant relocate to San Jose. After a few employees moved into their would-be new building, IBM decided instead to open a plant in China and moved their operation after merely thanking the City for the millions!

While the rich and powerful casually decide which area to gentrify next, the process of "removing blight" wiped out 1,200 units of truly affordable housing irrevocably. In fact, studies on homelessness in San Jose have shown that the loss of housing through SRO demolition was one of the primary causes of the city's homeless explosion in the last two decades. Redevelopment Agency officials scoff at the idea of replacing these units though State law requires that they do so.

Despite contemporary research on the structural causes of homelessness so vividly illustrated in the case of San Jose, when citizens are asked what caused the homeless problem they respond, "laziness and drug addiction". Drug and alcohol addiction do indeed play a role in homelessness, not primarily, but secondarily. In fact, the *Stanford Study on Homelessness in Santa Clara County 1992-93* concluded that once a person crosses the homeless threshold, drug addiction, mental illness, hopelessness, loss of self esteem and paralyzing fear set in. Once people reach these depths, however, the series of events that led there seem moot. It is easy to see how we often confuse the symptoms of homelessness with its causes.

The complex forces that create homelessness make this social ill one of the most insidious of our time. The one thing upon which all seem to agree (including San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown) is that homelessness is getting visibly worse. Nearly all recent studies on homelessness and poverty indicate that the prognosis for the poor in America is bleak unless there is a radical restructuring of priorities. The current "solutions" to homelessness — criminalizing the poor, building shelters and prisons, cutting benefits — are obviously not working.

Dear Mr. Manners:

Street Spirit takes great pride in introducing this new advice column by the world-renowned Richard 3 COM Pepsi Cola, now immortalized as our own Mr. Manners. Mr. Manners is himself a formerly homeless man (unfortunately, he's also a currently homeless man). But he believes that being homeless is no excuse to let the social proprieties slide. In his advice column, he encourages his peers on the streets to follow the dictates of proper etiquette, and to begin beautifying America — by their absence.



Art by Mike "Moby" Theobald

Dear Mr. Manners:

I'm a homeless guy, and I've cried out sometimes when I'm soaking wet and cold. I get angry, I swear and I cry. I try to be invisible because the police sure know how to use pressure. Can you help me with advice?

Sincerely, *Sam on the street*

Dear Sam on the street:

There is a big difference between the idle rich and the idle poor, boy. If you are homeless, it's probably your own fault. But try to dress well anyway.

Are you sick? There is a germ going around that is causing a lot of homelessness. It is called *Pentagonorrhea.* It is very fatal for millions of people.

To return to the difference between the idle rich and the idle poor, let me say that when you don't want to work or can't find a job, you are a bum, a lazy failure. However, when a rich man doesn't want to work, he is a *"bon vivant"*. When you lose money on the horses, you are a crumb-bum. When a rich man loses money on the horses, he is a "sport".

I have nothing more to say to you. Why don't you go to the Golden Gate Bridge with a diving board and a boombox playing "Jump!" by Van Halen? Have the good manners to clean up our society.

Tactfully yours, *Mr. Manners*

After Harvest

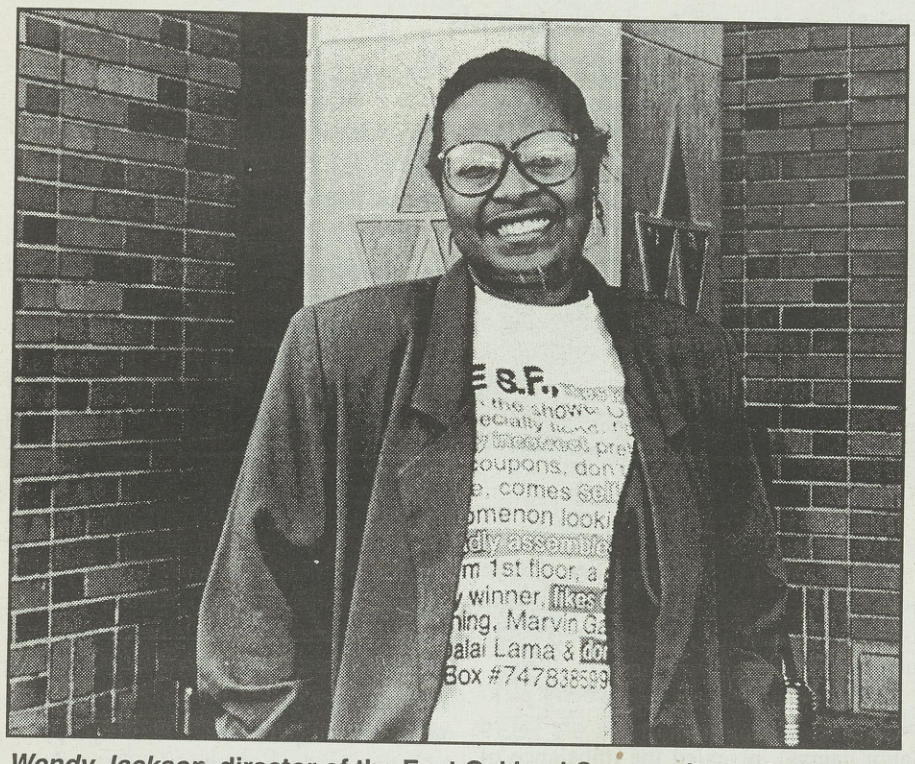
by Robert N. Zimmerman

After harvest,
Scarecrow hitchhiked to town,
to draw unemployment.

Panhandlers

Young exec's: trench coats; briefcases.
... Panhandlers ...
Vendor hawks foreign news.

Oakland Faces Welfare Cuts and Shelter Closures



Lydia Gans photo

Wendy Jackson, director of the East Oakland Community Project, a large homeless program which is imperiled because of funding cuts.

The question is, how much more money is the City of Oakland going to fund for revitalization of downtown? What happens to East Oakland? Why have a city council if they can't help poor people?

by Tanya L. Brown

As election time is nearing, many politicians are soliciting people to vote. The hot ticket this election year is the wide range of homeless individuals who are unregistered to vote and would like to register. Various organizations are rapidly registering voters everyday. Many homeless people feel like their vote doesn't count, but I am here to tell you it does!

With the cuts in Social Security and the newly passed Welfare Reform Act, the homeless population will increase tenfold. The shelters are already tremendously overbooked. There are not enough beds to service the needs of a growing population.

The devastating news is that various shelters are in danger of closing their doors due to the lack of funding from the cities, government and private citizens. East Oakland Community Project, which serves the East Bay and is one of the largest shelters in the Bay Area, is currently in a very critical state due to the lack of funding. This shelter provides three meals a day and lodging for 30 to 90 days.

Executive Director Wendy Jackson said she has to turn away people because the shelter is constantly filled, adding that "since the financial support for the shelter is not available, the daily operation is a struggle." I have spoken with various shelters in the Bay Area and several are facing the same funding shortfalls even as more homeless people need their services.

I spoke with homeless people of various backgrounds and cultures in Oakland and Berkeley, and heard many similar responses: they appreciate that the shelters are open, but many homeless people feel like the government doesn't give a damn about them.

All the new cutbacks in General Assistance, AFDC and Social Security will create another level of poverty. Arnold McClain, who stays in a shelter, says: "If shelters close, where would people like me go? Shelters don't only supply housing but many other services as well, such as support groups, job training and counseling."

People, I must ask this question: What happened to being "My Brothers Keeper?" Have we forgotten that people who are homeless are people and not just statistics? They are citizens, and they are taxpayers, or former taxpayers.

I recently read in the *East Bay Express* that the City of Oakland is once again forming an elaborate plan to redevelop a big, expensive business district in downtown Oakland. The question is, how much more money is the city going to fund for revitalization of downtown? What happens to East Oakland? In my opinion, the City of Oakland has lost touch with the citizens of Oakland. Why have a city council if they can't help poor people? It is not just how much money they can spend on multimillion-dollar downtown development projects, this is about people!

The City of Berkeley is the same way. Berkeley pays more money to the police department than to the homeless situation. If the city put aside a third of that money that is given to the police department into financially supporting shelters and transitional houses, the city's homeless population would decrease. The police wouldn't see the need for a tremendous amount of arrests — and, by the way, a night in jail costs more than a stay at a shelter. Let's stop building jails. Let's build alternative affordable housing for low- income individuals.

The Welfare Reform Act is a joke! The city and the government need to supply more jobs and job training. Who in their right mind can survive at a monthly living expense of $220, which is all a GA recipient receives?

We need to demand answers from the city, state and the federal government: Do you actually believe that a person prefers to be homeless? The answer is No! What if it were your sister, brother, mother or father? What would you do?

This is for the many people who are homeless: Exercise your power and vote this November! Stop being a statistic! Your voice must be heard.

Exile

by Julia Vinograd

There are always hints of home,
a place we've never been.
In classical paintings past the bored Madonnas
painted to please the church
or the boring noblemen painted to please the king
there's a few slanted rooftops in afternoon light
and a curtain blowing in an open window.
We can't see inside.
But who can mistake that curve of a valley
we drew on treasure maps when we were children?
Not for the gold, but to go there
where we belong.
There are always hints of home.
Watching a tv movie
because I was putting off typing
a car commercial had the shiny new engine
show off how well it turned
and there in a bend of the road
was the same, longed for village.
Only a moment.
Afternoon light on the rooftops
and the open window and I called, "wait!"
as if there was someone to hear me.
Then the movie came on but I turned it off.
Home. No one has been there.
For a long time I sat listening
to the clanking of the elderly radiator
trying to warm my room.

Operation Park

Under Mayor Willie Brown, the same Matrix-era repression is camoflauged under a new name

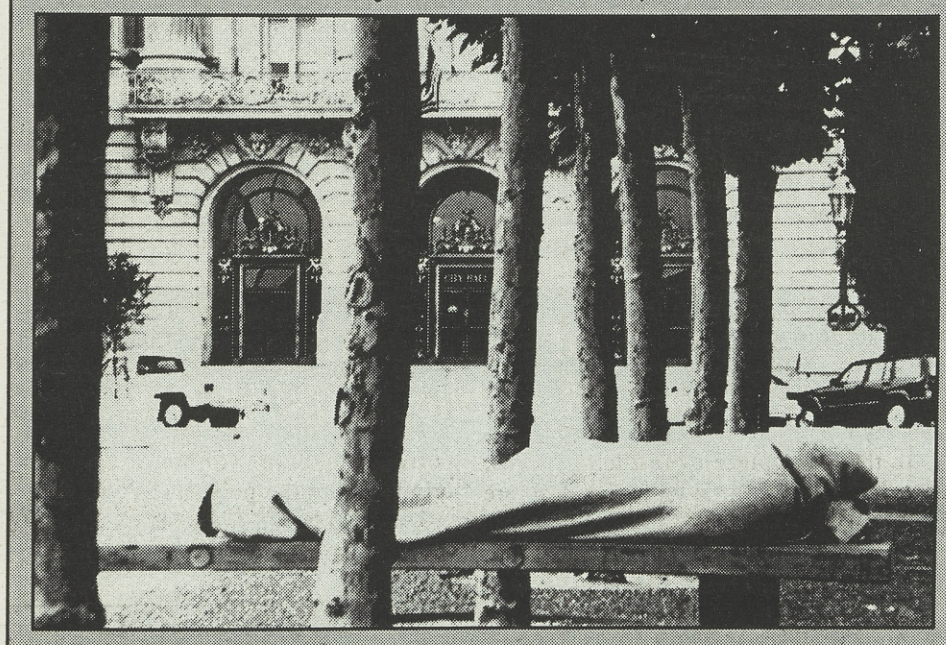


Photo and story by Jan Spence

For years, homeless people have gathered in Civic Center Park. It is public and free, and near the services in downtown San Francisco. And there is camaraderie and support as they come together in small groups. But the public parks have been cleared again of our homeless population. But sweeping homeless people out of the park isn't called Matrix any longer — it's called Operation Park.

I called Commander Santos of the SFPD's Field Operation Bureau and asked for an explanation of Operation Park. He said it was not another Matrix program, but that a women's group "put the heat on the mayor and the mayor put the heat on the police department." Does this sound like Matrix to you?

"It's a plan to return the parks to the children, to families, and so people can relax and enjoy the quality of life that they are entitled to." Santos said. "It's a plan to enforce the laws already in place."

Deja vu, anyone?

Santos explained that four months ago a group of concerned citizens sent a report card on the parks to the mayor. "I learned to be neat in the Army. If I were homeless, I would be neat. I don't bother anyone who is neat and who doesn't bother anyone else," Santos continued.

I said that the homeless have left the park and suggested that maybe they were intimidated by the police sweeping through the parks.

Santos replied, "We wear uniforms. If that's intimidating to them, that's their problem. We are being environmentalists," he said laughing, "we are being concerned about the ecosystem. If you urinate on a tree, it will die."

No matter what you call it, Matrix program or Operation Park, it's the same "get outta here" and "move along" scenario. And the cruel remarks haven't changed either.

Jody, a young lady homeless for three months, said she asked the cops, "Where do you want us to go?" One of them replied, "Well, I hear that Australia is good now."

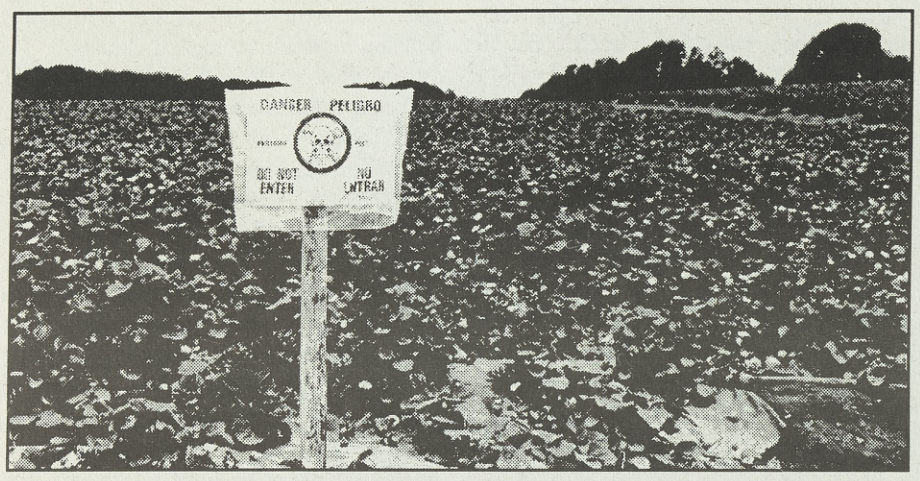
An Economic Imbalance

It was reported recently that Mayor Willie Brown, after only six months on the job, had complained publicly about his salary. "I can't afford to pay my four mortgages on that," he was quoted by Matier & Ross, referring to his $141,342 annual pay. The *Chronicle* also reported that Brown is now the second highest-paid mayor in the United States.

The person sleeping in the shadow of S.F. City Hall in the above photo has many daily obstacles to overcome -- it isn't necessary to name them all here. But, for sure, we know that he doesn't have to struggle to make one — or four— mortgage payments on the first of the month. He doesn't have even *one* home.

A Harvest of Poverty and Pesticides

Strawberry pickers in Watsonville endure low wages, high housing costs and toxic chemicals



Skull and crossbones **sign in Watsonville strawberry field carries a grim warning about the toxic effects of pesticides.** Jan Spence photo

by Jan Spence

California produces 80% of the strawberries grown in the United States. The town of Watsonville and environs on the central coast of California is called the strawberry capital of America, harvesting and shipping more than one-half of the state's production.

Low wages, slum housing and a lack of benefits have tormented California's migrant farm workers for generations. And today, there is another issue — the use of methyl bromide, a pesticide used routinely in the soil and the stored products of the fresh produce industry.

It was the height of the strawberry season when a group of investigative reporters and concerned citizens journeyed to Watsonville for a weekend field trip. We met with workers, growers, union organizers, activists and environmentalists. We made on-site visits to farms using methyl bromide, to organic and family farms using no chemicals, and to a labor camp.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency classifies methyl bromide among the most lethal of toxic pesticides and states that it is destroying the earth's protective ozone layer as well. Under the Clean Air Act, it is scheduled to be phased out in the year 2001. Its production and importation will be prohibited. However, tensions are high among the growers and activists. There is aggressive lobbying in Washington, D.C., and a political fight to prevent the phase-out.

The Pesticide Action Network, an international coalition of citizens' groups who monitor the use of pesticides and support safe alternatives, reported to the visitors on the health dangers of methyl bromide. From 1982 to 1990, at least 18 people in California died from exposure to the pesticide. There are also reports of birth defects and damage to the central nervous system. Farm workers and residents living near the fumigated fields have experienced symptoms of dizziness, headaches, blurred vision and nausea.

European Nations Ban Methyl Bromide

Representing the coalition, Anne Schonfield said, "California strawberry growers use almost 25% of the state's supply of methyl bromide, using approximately 350 pounds per acre.... The Netherlands was in the forefront to ban the dangerous pesticide. Germany, Switzerland and other European nations have also banned it."

The growers were reluctant to talk to us, but they did. One didn't wanted his name used or to be quoted. They would not permit photographs of the strawberry pickers working in the field, saying they wanted to protect the privacy of workers.

Dave Riggs of the California Strawberry Commission defended the growers: "The methyl bromide issue is in the political arena. The farmers have been dismissed by the activists... We can't ship strawberries to Japan without using the bromide, they don't want our insects. Moving pests from one country to another is a problem." He also said that the risk of farming strawberries is too great without the use of the bromide and that alternatives could prove to be worse.



Strawberry pickers **at a labor camp near Watsonville.** Jan Spence photo

But the farm workers call strawberries *las frutas del diablo,* or, the fruit of the devil. Bending in a jackknife position for hours to gather the fragile berries causes back injuries, and farm workers are constantly exposed to harmful pesticides.

Teachers Unite Against Pesticides

Teachers are standing united against pesticides. Some of the strawberry fields border on school property, and the California Federation of Teachers recently passed a resolution, unanimously, against pesticides in and around their schools. Parents and teachers report more absenteeism, respiratory illnesses and flu-like symptoms among the children after chemicals have been applied in the fields.

Marilyn Garrett, teacher and activist, co-founded Farm Without Harm in 1995 in an effort to protect schools, homes and communities against pesticides. The group is calling for legislation to put the health of children before the profits of agribusiness and corporations.

United Farm Workers

At the United Farm Workers' headquarters, we met with David Mandriz and other organizers who are conducting a campaign to unionize the strawberry pickers. "We are offering protection of the laws already in effect, but are not enforced," Mandriz, a paralegal, said. "Strawberry pickers have been fired for wearing union buttons, another was forced to eat the green strawberries that he accidentally picked. We have filed complaints. We want to address the problems of work pressures and harassment on the job. There is a lack of respect and dignity. There is favoritism. We are demanding grievance procedures as part of the contract."

He called out some of the grievances: fractures of the back, infections from pesticides, firing without cause, discrimination in the strawberry fields. Mandriz told us, "Drinking water, which is not clean, is served to the workers in buckets, and with only one cup. They wash their hands in the same water used for irrigation, where pesticides are present."

The union members talked about the possibility of a strawberry boycott. But some of the migrant workers are slow to join the union. They don't understand unions and they have a fear of the unknown.

Meeting with migrant strawberry pickers at a labor camp, (and they *are* called labor camps), revealed the imbalance of low minimum wages and the high cost of housing in Watsonville. Ophelia, 36, and her husband both work in the strawberry fields, earning a total of $760 a month. They have five children, and two nephews are staying with them. The nine people live in a two-room unit plus a kitchen, and pay $460 a month rent. They feel lucky to have a roof over their heads. With the influx of workers at the peak of the harvest, housing becomes even more acute. A worker will pay to sleep in a car. It is common for the migrants to pay $100 to $200 a month to sleep in a garage with anywhere from four to ten other people.

Ophelia wants longer work hours because she wants to earn more money. Work starts at 6:30 a.m., but there is an oversupply of workers so sometimes they're through at noon or earlier.

The workers had a question for us, too. They wanted to know what we thought of the union.

Less Toxic Alternatives

There is a sign of hope on the horizon for a more sustainable, less toxic form of agriculture in California.

Community-supported agriculture began in Japan about 30 years ago. Consumers, concerned about the loss of local farmland, approached growers and offered their support. This grassroots movement spread to Western Europe, then to Canada and the United States about seven years ago. It's a new concept in California but is growing rapidly. In 1990, there were two community-supported agricultural projects in the state — now there are 80. There are between 30,000 and 50,000 consumers throughout the country today who depend on communitysupported farms for the majority of their produce.

Thomas Broz grew up in Ecuador and has always lived close to the land. Today, he's organic farming in Watsonville on Live Earth Farms. He defines organic farming as growing produce without pesticides and understanding your own ecosystem. He has adopted the community-supported agriculture system and is in his first year of exploring sustainable agriculture. His wife does the bookkeeping. The Brozes supply 25 families with a weekly box of fresh produce. For $15.00, a family receives an assortment of 16 items of fresh fruits, vegetables, flowers. They hope to break even in three years.

They have a long waiting list of consumers, and when a story appears in the newspaper, Broz said that the phone rings off the hook. His goal is to feed 100 to 125 families on five acres with an intensive method of production. "Volunteers are plentiful," he said, "and we hold a harvest dinner on Fridays. We like having a close relationship with our consumers."

The last speaker on our agenda was Will Allen, who has a Ph.D. in tropical forest agriculture. He calls organic farming a love affair. "Some people with delicate systems have to eat organic food," he said. "Some people rub food on their arm, and if they don't break out, they come back to buy more."

Allen made strong statements against the pesticides. "Some of the chemicals used on produce are 'war toys' — they were developed for war strategy. The first name for DDT was genocide. So who invited 'war toys' to the dinner table? Four of the top six chemicals used on strawberries are cancer causing... as long as consumers accept chemicals, we will live with toxic soup."

Defeat the Attacks
On Immigrants & Public Housing Tenants

Speak out against government housing policies that will result in thousands of undocumented immigrants and public housing tenants being evicted from federally-subsidized homes: the HUD non-citizen rule, the Hope 6 demolitions of public housing, and the "One Strike, You're Out" policy.

Join the Eviction Defense Network and the Immigrant Housing Workgroup in a demonstration in front of the Nonprofit Housing Association's conference.

Thursday, October 10, 9 a.m.
Fort Mason Conference Center, San Francisco

For information, call (415) 431-0931

County Board Votes: 'End Referrals to East Bay Hospital!'

Alameda County Mental Health Board votes to halt referrals to East Bay Hospital. County Supervisors hear riveting testimony about EBH's appalling mistreatment of patients.

Declaring that psychiatric patients should not be placed "in a substandard hospital one day longer than we need to", the Alameda County Mental Health Board voted unanimously on September 17 to recommend a halt to all involuntary referrals of county residents to East Bay Hospital. The mental health board also recommended that the Alameda County Board of Supervisors expedite the development of more in-county facilities for psychiatric patients as an alternative to East Bay Hospital (EBH) in Richmond.

The recommendations of the mental health board are expected to carry significant weight, since it is the official advisory board to the Board of Supervisors on the issues of treatment and care for the county's psychiatric clients.

Several board members said they were very moved by the highly critical testimony against East Bay Hospital by many patients' rights advocates at the Board of Supervisors' Health Committee hearing held a week earlier, on September 11.

At that Board of Supervisors' hearing, Alane Friedrich, chair of the Alameda County Mental Health Board, testified that, in March, 1995, her board asked Contra Costa County to develop a committee to rectify "the number of problems that had been brought to our attention" regarding patient mistreatment at EBH.

But the effort to improve conditions at EBH failed, said Friedrich. "There was no response to our request. We tried to work something out that would enable our patients at East Bay Hospital to have better care. We did not succeed. Continuing problems at East Bay Hospital led us about a month ago to write a letter to the Alameda County Mental Health administration requesting that they develop alternatives within our own county for our patients so that we do not have to use it."

Friedrich noted that the Mental Health Board has worked out problems at other psychiatric hospitals with great success. But, she added, "In our experience, East Bay Hospital has not shown that cooperation to us, and instead of sending administrators or staff to a meeting, they have sent their attorneys. Therefore, I would ask that you listen to the concerns expressed today. Our current recommendation is that you develop in-county facilities."

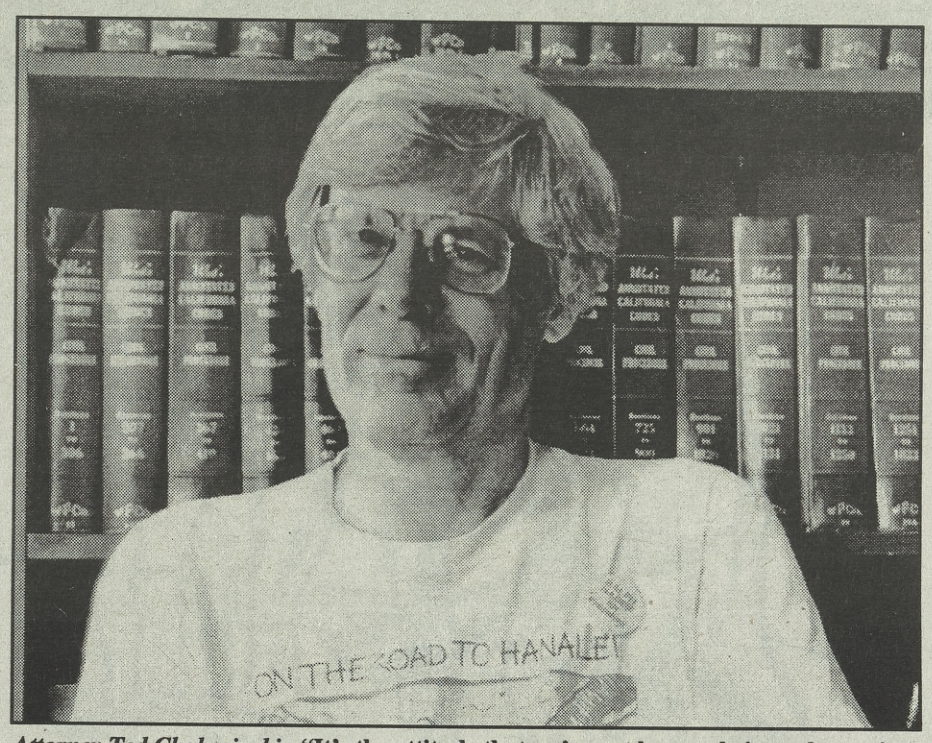
Supervisor Keith Carson, who convened the Health Committee hearing on EBH with Supervisor Wilma Chan, asked Friedrich what level of cooperation she had found in attempting to work with EBH on the concerns that had been raised.

"I've had to be careful not to be sued," Friedrich replied grimly.

Carson then asked how Alameda County could relocate its clients if it stopped sending them to EBH.

Friedrich said, "At the executive session of the Mental Health Board, Marye Thomas (the county mental health director) felt that facilities could be developed within the county given an opportunity to work on it. I do know I removed my own family member from East Bay Hospital."

Dr. Steven Heisler, an administrator and co-owner of EBH, stated at the hearing that between one-third to one-half of EBH's patients are referred from Alameda County. Heisler, who has come under fire for running a psychiatric hospital with the largest number of patients-rights violations in the Bay Area, said that East Bay Hospital is "trying to rectify all our problems and answer all the allegations."



Attorney Ted Chabasinski: **"It's the attitude that we're not human beings, that we're people without value, that's why these abuses happen. If East Bay Hospital was doing this to any other group of people, they'd be stopped in an instant."** Lydia Gans photo

"We've begun to look at some quality assurance issues that have been raised," Heisler said. "Frankly, at the moment we're so up to our eyeballs in allegations, it's been hard to work on draining the swamp. Primarily because of the publicity that we've had recently, each of the 11 counties' Boards of Supervisors — who I think were all contacted either by *Street Spirit* or the *Bay Guardian* — each of the Boards of Supervisors have felt a responsibility to come in and take a look and see what our hospital is like.

"It does take up an awful lot of our time showing them our facility, showing them our policies and procedures, and so we've not had a chance to implement some of the changes that we intend to."

Twenty speakers from patients-rights groups and investigative agencies recommended at the hearing that Alameda County halt all referrals to East Bay.

Janet Wilson, program director for Mental Health Consumer Concerns, reported that her agency has "recommended that Contra Costa County should cease all referrals to East Bay Hospital until the recommendations of the State Office of Patients Rights' report about the hospital are implemented. The position of our Board of Directors is that patients should not be sent to East Bay Hospital until a plan of correction is met."

Leslie Morrison, an attorney and registered nurse who works in the investigations unit of Protection And Advocacy, (PAI), said, "PAI has serious concerns about the propriety of Alameda County or any county continuing to contract with East Bay Hospital for psychiatric services."

PAI, a federally funded nonprofit agency with a mandate to protect the rights of mentally disabled persons and investigate allegations of abuse and neglect at psychiatric hospitals, has conducted several investigations of EBH.

Noting that five patients have died at EBH in recent history, Morrison testified: "These deaths need to be put into context. We're not just looking at whether the deaths can be attributed to abuse and neglect, but at a pattern of inadequate care." Marc Kiefer, a 38-year-old Alameda County resident, died two days after his admission to EBH due to an overdose of anti-psychotic medication.

Morrison said, "There was an inadequate medical evaluation at East Bay Hospital" for medication which contributed to his death. "Mr. Kiefer died while he was in seclusion and restraints," she said. "At the time his death was discovered, full rigor mortis had set in. That means he had been dead for several hours before it was detected by East Bay Hospital. This indicates a failure by staff there to monitor patients in seclusion and restraints."

Morrison pointed out that although 80% of EBH's beds are psychiatric beds, it is licensed as a general acute-care hospital, not as a psychiatric facility. "This means that they are not required to meet a number of standards that deal with the provision of psychiatric services," she said, adding that if EBH were licensed as a psychiatric hospital, it would have to provide the kind of therapy and programs patients require.

"East Bay Hospital has not been able to make the kinds of changes that have been recommended by a number of organizations, including the Office of Patients Rights," Morrison said. "We urge you to not continue contracting with East Bay Hospital for the provision of services for Alameda County residents.

"The quality of care East Bay Hospital delivers is substandard, and because they're licensed as an acute care hospital, they are not required to provide the kind of care that should be provided to acutely ill psychiatric patients."

Teresa Nelson, director of the State Office of Patients' Rights, said that her agency drafted reports on EBH in 1995 and 1996 that documented a number of serious problems at the hospital, including overcrowding, a lack of any kind of meaningful programs or therapy, inexperienced staff, poor training, problems with the monitoring of medications and seclusion and restraints practices.

Nelson said that the Office of Patients' Rights (OPR) sent their reports to EBH and had a number of meetings to discuss the need for improvement. "Their concessions were extremely limited," she said, adding that over the next year, the fundamental problems were not addressed.

Nelson testified that she has examined 80-plus psychiatric facilities in California. Supervisor Chan asked, "Did you find that with East Bay Hospital there was less of a willingness to respond to your findings?"

Nelson replied: "Absolutely. There was less willingness on the part of the facility to respond to the concerns and to address the problems raised in the OPR's reports of both 1995 and 1996."

Compared to the other 80 facilities she has examined, Nelson said, "East Bay Hospital ranks very low in the quality of its physical space, its programming — I'm very concerned about the programming, there's really nothing going on there — and the quality of interaction between the staff and patients."

Wilson Riles, Jr., Regional Director of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), testified that AFSC "is the publisher of *Street Spirit*, and it was that organ which thoroughly investigated and exposed the problems that have been going on at East Bay Hospital."

"I think that this county has a heavy responsibility to immediately suspend any further referrals to East Bay," Riles said.

"One of the most precious things you have to guard is the lives and health of the citizens of Alameda County. Whether they are poor or mentally ill does not in any way lessen that responsibility. Clearly this facility for years has proven itself incapable of caring for and protecting the lives of Alameda County citizens.

"It is negligent that the county does not have in place an alternative plan that they could use in terms of referrals, and you ought to get busy about that. The truth is all too clear that the risk is too high to continue to refer patients to this facility. You don't want to take that kind of risk with the lives of your citizens."

Ted Chabasinski said that, as an attorney and patients' rights advocate, he had investigated conditions at EBH's locked ward. "The Two South Ward at East Bay is about twice the size of my one-bedroom apartment, a ward where 20 people live in misery. People are just crammed in there. They get no attention whatsoever. Frequently there would be no staff on that ward, nobody. The staff would be sitting behind a locked glass booth. Patients would pound on the door and be ignored; they'd beg for their possessions, they'd be ignored. Complete neglect."

Chabasinski testified that, as a child, he had spent 10 years of his life in a state psychiatric hospital in New York.

"When I walked onto that ward of East Bay Hospital for the first time, I knew where I was," he said. "It was the same kind of snake-pit that I'd had to spend 10 years of my life in. It's the same kind of attitude that we're not human beings and we don't count for anything, that we're people without value — and that's why these abuses happen. If an institution like East Bay Hospital was doing this to any other group of people, they'd be stopped in an instant. But because we are labeled this way, because society says we're not worth anything, this goes on and on.

"We need protection. We need public officials to speak out about our rights. We're human beings that are worthy of respect and none of us get it at East Bay Hospital."

Jenny Miller, a patients' rights advocate who worked at EBH, said, "When I was there the level of over-medication was incredible. Most people spent the day lying in bed. When I was preparing people for their hearing, I would have family members say to me, 'Why are they talking like that?' And the reason they were talking like that is they were so over-medicated they could hardly speak, so it was very hard to represent them at their hearings. There was a tremendous amount of overt and covert coercion forcing people to take the medication at East Bay Hospital."

Miller said: "One of the problems at East Bay is that they get their money from Medi-Cal and they're licensed to provide general medical care and they don't. To me that's a scam — they're not providing medical care. I never saw anybody getting major surgery or any kind of significant medical treatment there. I just don't think it existed when I was there."

At the end of the hearing, Chan and Carson said that they would meet with county staff regarding a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Chan and Carson are expected to meet with Marye Thomas and Dave Kears from the county departments of health and mental health in early October to form their recommendations regarding referrals to East Bay.

Increased Political Repression Targets Homeless Activism Across the Nation



by Keith McHenry

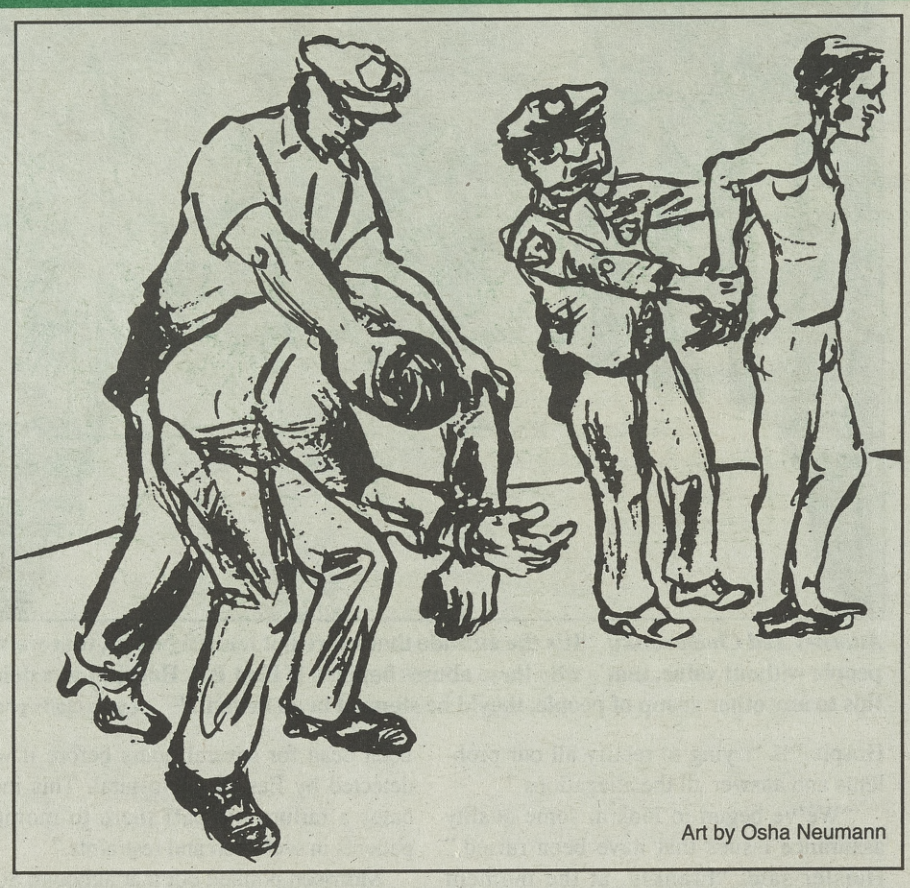
The summer of 1996 saw political repression in the United States and Canada increase. Along with stepped-up police harassment of the homeless and the implementation of anti-homeless laws, city governments also made efforts to stop groups such as Food Not Bombs from sharing food and protesting for economic justice.

In August, city officials in the northern California town of Arcata filed an injunction requesting that the court ban the local Food Not Bombs group from continuing its protest and free food distribution at the Arcata Plaza. Five volunteers face civil contempt charges and could spend up to two months in jail.

Several times this August, police stopped people from sharing food with the hungry in Eureka, California. Don, who was hoping to eat with the people in Eureka, said that each time people arrived with food the police would surround the car and threaten to arrest the volunteers if they attempted to serve food. After several days of police interference, the volunteers sent the city government a letter telling them that it was illegal to stop people from feeding the hungry. The police have backed down for the time being.

Police repression crossed the border in late June, when members of Quebec City Food Not Bombs reported that the Swat Team raided their home and arrested four volunteers. They were charged with attempting to overthrow the Quebec Provincial Government, distributing heinous propaganda, and organizing a riot at the Provincial Capital Building on June 23, 1996. Several thousand people were attacked by riot police at a protest against nationalism that coincided with Quebec's Saint Jean Baptiste Day. Riot police had attacked the protest and demonstrators broke out the windows of the Provincial Capital, doing an estimated $700,000 damage, according to government officials.

The four Quebec Food Not Bombs activists were jailed for 30 days, then released because the jail was flooded by high water from the Saint Lawrence River.



Art by Osha Neumann

In Montreal, 70 people were arrested at Berrie Park during a protest against a new park curfew which is designed to drive the homeless and youth out of an area of town that is being gentrified. Montreal Food Not Bombs sponsored a protest called Midnight Snack on July 28, 1996, at which several hundred people defied the midnight curfew. After several hours, the protesters marched to Police Station 33 which has been responsible for harassing poor people in Berrie Square. When the protesters marched back to Berrie Square, the police arrested 70 people.

In July, volunteer Dan Izzo was arrested and charged with obstructing a police officer while sharing food with Calgary Food Not Bombs. Sarah reported that the Calgary police tried to stop Food Not Bombs from sharing food. When the volunteers refused to stop, Dan was arrested. At last report he was free and awaiting trial.

In late August, Salt Lake City Food Not Bombs started getting harassed by the police for feeding people at Pioneer Park. Developers asked that the park have its name changed to Pioneer Square so it could become a night club area. Mormon Church activists attended the City Council meeting and were able to stop the name change. Food Not Bombs told the council that the police had ordered them to stop sharing food at the park. City officials met with Salt Lake City Food Not Bombs the next day, and told the group that they could continue to share food at Pioneer Park.

Also in August, the New York City Police shut down a homeless protest in the Lower East Side, arresting 30 people for attending the event. The protest was in response to the eviction of the 13th Street Squat. An armored personnel carrier, three police helicopters and about 500 riot police drove out 30 squatters early on the morning of August 14. Two days later, local activists attempted to hold a speak-out in Tompkins Square but police arrived and told the protesters that they had to leave. As people were leaving the park, another group of police blocked their exit and arrested 30 people.

During August, police in Albuquerque, New Mexico, attempted to stop the local Food Not Bombs chapter from feeding the hungry, claiming that the group needed a health permit. Food Not Bombs moved its location and the police have not threatened them at their new serving area. Food Not Bombs had apparently unknowingly shared food in an area that had been declared part of Mayor Chavez's "Good for You Albuquerque" program. Spencer, who is active with Albuquerque Food Not Bombs, reported that city laws do require people to get a health permit. He also indicated that the mayor's program is designed to "clean up" certain neighborhoods, apparently in an effort to move the homeless out of these areas.

Bruce Hagert and Carrie Chandler were cited on March 31, 1996, for sharing food without a permit at Central Park in Whittier, a suburban town near Los Angeles. Bruce Hagert's charges have been dropped, but Food Not Bombs volunteer Carrie Chandler is facing charges of holding an "unlicensed picnic".

Whittier officials told Food Not Bombs that they must apply for permits before they could feed the hungry. At first the group refused to apply for permits, stating that you obviously don't need a permit to share free food. After Bruce and Carrie were cited, the group did apply for a permit several times but the city refused to issue one. The city claims that local residents have complained about the homeless and that there were health violations. But city officials are not able to show that anyone has been made sick from eating a meal served by Whittier Food Not Bombs since the group started feeding people in Central Park on Easter, 1993.

As President Clinton delivered his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, federal, state and Chicago police were raiding the Active Resistance Conference. Two people had to be hospitalized after police pepper-sprayed several people attending the conference. The police violently forced the conference participants from the ballroom that they had rented to hold the gathering. The ballroom was several blocks away from the United Center where the Democrats were holding their convention.

Six members of CounterMedia were also arrested while leaving a giant puppet parade called the Festival Of the Repressed. Police confiscated video cameras from people who had taken footage of the protests against the Democratic Party. The Clinton Administration effectively whited out any news about protests against his Welfare Reform bill or his other attacks on the poor. The arrests of people attempting to report on protests seemed to play a role in giving the impression that there were no protests during the Democratic Convention.

Both Democratic and Republican leaders have led the attacks against people protesting for the rights of the poor. Is this a pre-election strategy to hide public dissatisfaction with the current state of the country? And what does it say about how undemocratic the U.S. elections are? Or maybe this increase in political repression is a sign that government officials are concerned that with the drastic cuts in welfare, healthcare and education that these protests could lead to a new social revolution?

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Once-Homeless Man Pulls Off Benefit Concert in People's Park for Medical Marijuana

by B.N. Duncan

Dan McMullan, who's had a lot of experience as a rough man living a rough life while homeless, set up and MC'ed a concert in People's Park to promote the altruistic cause of legal medical use of marijuana.

Though never having done anything like this before, Dan pulled off this complicated project at the Park on August 24, 1996. As someone homeless, Dan came to have a lot to do with People's Park because of its free food and free clothing services, its providing access to kindred spirits, and its being a place to hang out in for free.

While having often been a misfit, especially through over-fondness for the bottle, he has a strong duality for both positive and negative inclination — as do quite a few people homeless and otherwise on the fringe in Berkeley. He has an originality that many people don't have.

Along with plenty of entertainment by several poets and musicians at the well-attended concert, speakers offered sensible testimony about the long-established value and need for the medical uses of marijuana.

Dan McMullan was pleased to discover how readily musicians rallied to the cause when he asked them to perform. He said, "When I called Country Joe to ask him to do this gig, he said, 'I ain't playing this year at all,' and I told him, 'It's for a good cause, Proposition 215, the Compassionate Use Initiative which would legalize marijuana for people with AIDS, cancer, glaucoma, and maybe even a little boo-boo on their arm.' And he said, 'I'll be there.'"

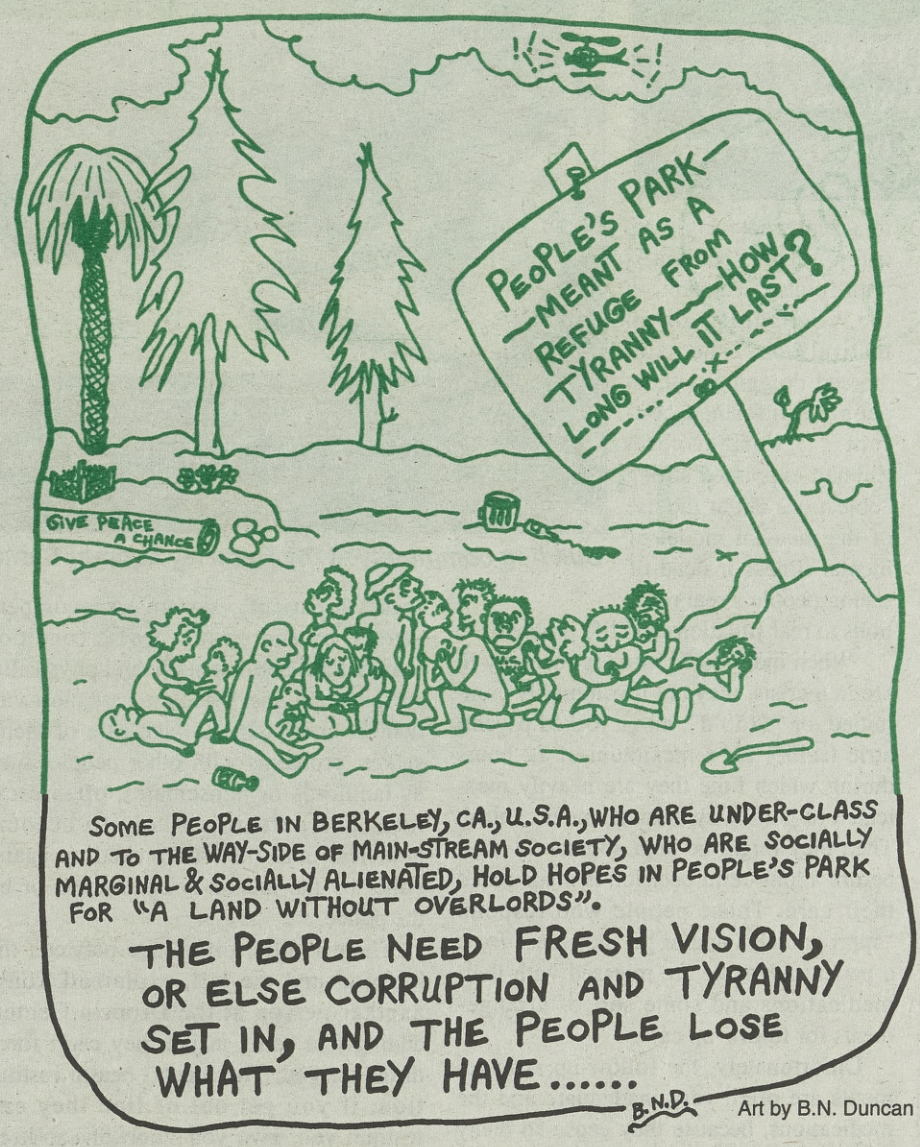
Witnessing Country Joe McDonald sound more vital and powerful than I'd heard him on records long ago, gave me an uplifted, fresh feeling that life keeps holding promise and opportunity. Maybe there's enough persistent spirit for People's Park to keep going for some time to come for future generations.

I was a young man in the 60's, and at this concert I got unexpected reactions of nostalgia and hope for the future. Despite all the negative, destructive trends in our society, a certain precious spirit and largely implicit vision persist that clearly appeared at this concert, more (I feel) than at the People's Park anniversary occasions I've been to. One particular sight: a young girl dancing merrily — who might suggest a healthy, lovely plant moving in the wind — exactly like in the 60's... stimulated for me the sense that life can have more freedom and joy than I'm usually aware of.

After the concert, Dan commented about local street-poet Julia Vinograd reading her poetry early in the show: "Julia Vinograd was like an invocation of the spirit of People's Park. Many people were against my putting poetry into the show, but I feel Julia Vinograd is one of Berkeley's own, and it would set off the tone of the day more aptly than if we jumped into some of the more Heavy Metal music that the younger generation likes."

Dan gave an appreciative review to several of the featured musicians at the concert: "Bones is a raw, natural, fuckin' talented musician. He did stay sober for that show, and he pulled off a good set and got the audience going. I think he's great.

"Kenyu, she came up to me during the concert to ask to sing. I needed someone to fill the time while changing bands. I told my wife, 'I want you to introduce this girl', to have my beloved wife part of the show. This girl Kenyu sang from the heart, and really made for a nice moment that was really unexpected. When Kenyu was through, she said she'd never had this opportunity to sing to people, and she walked away euphoric. There was something about that moment that really touched my heart, and was part of an indefinable magic that seemed to permeate the entire event.



Art by B.N. Duncan

"John Mink, who sings for Annulus, he helped me a lot to set up the concert. The band Annulus plays a Heavy-Metal kind of music with infusion of Jefferson Airplane-type fuzzy noisemaker atmosphere fun. I was really impressed with Annulus.

"The band Fah Q did a great set; and then the Fah Q drummer Zane with his girlfriend Melissa stage-managed; and Melissa took care of my baby daughter. There was a spirit of cooperation with all the musicians sharing equipment and helping one another move equipment, that did a great deal in making the show a success.

"The drummer Larry Hunt, who plays the upside-down buckets on campus and drives everyone crazy, and The Blue Flame drove everyone wild at the concert, with a really good set with a talented band behind him; and with some great visual tricks, e.g., a drum solo featuring flaming drumsticks, Larry's fire-eating drum solo.

"The band The San Francisco Legacy, which is a sort of house band for the Cannabis Buyers Club, I booked on the faith of my cousin saying they're a good band. I went into San Francisco the day before the People's Park concert to hear one of their practice sessions, and I knew they would fit in with what I envisioned for the show. And I wasn't disappointed.

"Carol Denney was great. Carol Denney embodies a lot of the spirit of the struggle for People's Park, and the struggles that have been in People's Park, and it mirrors a lot of the struggles she's had with her health in her own life. She has the voice of an angel, singing lyrics that bring you back down to earth.

"Country Joe McDonald... When I was a kid, I can remember listening to the Woodstock album in the early 70's, and the most provocative part was always, 'Give me an F... Give me a U... Give me a C... Give me a K... What does that spell?!' And that was so *out there* for me as a kid, it always left an impression on me. And to stand on the People's Park stage and say, 'Ladies and gentlemen, Country Joe McDonald and his band will probably be one of the thrills in my life!' was even more thrilling. It was probably one of the best performances Country Joe has had in years.

"When I came up with the idea for this concert, Mike 'Moby' Theobald, a cartoonist who's been homeless and seen a lot of People's Park, and who's produced a lot of brilliant, real-life-oriented comic books in a series, *Down And Out In Berkeley,* said, 'Yeh, man, we can do it.' We used his phone for messages. He did a lot of dealings with the bands. And he saved the day by being a co-MC with me. If it wasn't for the Mobester, the show would've never come off."

Dan McMullan had dedicated the event to the memory of Rosebud Denovo, an activist for People's Park who had often been homeless, and who was killed by police on August 25, 1992. Dan had known Rosebud from when he was homeless, and they had hung out a lot together.

In an August 22, 1993, interview that I conducted with Dan, he said, "We were out here in front of this bench where the People's Park Annex was; and we're sitting there, and it was me and Rosebud and Andy; and the cops came up, and they were hassling Rosebud, and they told Rosebud, they go, 'Well, you know what, we're just going to put a bullet in your head.' I called to a cop, I go, 'Man, are you talking a bunch of bullshit, threatening people?' And he goes, 'Well, the bullet could bounce off her head and hit you.'

"The whole Rosebud thing was pretty far out. [Rosebud had invaded the UCB Chancellor's home with a machete; what was actually going on inside her at the time is a mystery.] They sent this cop in there that got shot five times in Oakland, and just got off the injured thing; they sent him in with a dog where there was nobody in the house — they got everybody out of the house; and all's they really had to do was cordon the place out and say, 'Come out of there!' But, they didn't do that. It was like they executed her. You know, you don't send somebody into a potentially dangerous situation with a gun when you don't have to."

Dan McMullan is a natural extrovert, and loved being MC for the concert. He found a truly constructive channel for expressing his assertive, outgoing energy and pizzazz. While often having been obnoxious, rowdy, brawling and self-destructive, Dan has a special brightness of mind and disposition, and an exceptionally free spirit: it depends a lot on how the energy is directed. He stands as one personal example of an "off-beat and proud" spirit that lingers among some people on the down-under social margin in Berkeley, particularly at Telegraph Avenue and People's Park, who contains within himself marked capacities for failure and for uplifting inspiration.

Some people who don't meet some regular, standardized, mainstream requirements for adjustment can do well in ways that they choose for themselves, and have it in them to do outstanding achievements.

Some key figures in this benefit show in People's Park were gifted persons who have known homelessness as part of paying their dues in life, and who have grown more personally and gained deeper perspective. There are some hearts and spirits that learn more about the need to give from doing without. In Berkeley, especially in the south-campus Telegraph area, there lives an important proportion of people homeless and of homeless experience who have valuable things to do and communicate.

Veteran

by Julia Vinograd

The war hadn't made any sense
but nobody expected it to,
after all, it was a war.
But now nothing else made sense either.
All the people were made of papier mache,
they'd melt if you left them out in the rain.
And you always had to talk as quietly
as if you were sneaking up on the enemy.
Maybe they always were
but he wasn't interested.
He didn't have any plans.
He'd stand still in the street for no reason,
reach down for a dead leaf
and study it carefully
like reading a map.
People parted quietly to go around him
looking away.
It seemed the thing to do.

1st Of The Month

by Julia Vinograd

Checks arrive and the street boils with money,
not that there's so much money
but that money's so unusual.
Like a herd of centaurs with mirror shades
galloping past the cars
and giving drivers the finger.
As if we'd all just won the lottery
for a week and then it's gone.
Debts, rent, food and in the last week
everyone borrows from everyone
who borrows from everyone else.
Forever and ever goddam.
For us it's the other way around.
Most of the month we're stuck as superheroes
battling the forces of evil for ugly survival,
but when the check comes on the 1st
we slip into phone booths
and get to come out like ordinary people
for about a week.

Forsaken and Forlorn

Decades of broken promises leave mentally disabled persons destitute and abandoned on the streets

by Lydia Gans

Does homelessness cause mental disability or does mental illness bring about homelessness? Whichever comes first, there is a strong association between the two conditions. Some studies suggest that anywhere from 25% to 45% of homeless people are mentally disabled but it depends largely on how disability is defined.

We don't even have a good estimate of the number of homeless people at any particular place and time. That too, depends on who is doing the counting. However you look at it, it means a lot of people — people of all ages, struggling and suffering human beings who society is not adequately providing for. The one thing they all have in common is that they are poor.

For some people we might say that their mental disability "caused" them to be homeless in the sense that the disability came first. In the past they would have been confined in a state mental hospital. When the institutions for people who were labeled mentally ill were first established, they were called "asylums," and they were indeed asylums, or places of refuge for people who could not take care of themselves.

But over the years the original philosophy of these institutions, to cure or to provide compassionate care for mentally disabled persons, became subverted by political and class interests. The public asylums became huge and overcrowded, the attendant staff harassed and overworked. Instead of treating the patients' illnesses, the focus of the institutions deteriorated to controlling their behavior by means of physical restraints or unpleasant and painful procedures such as lobotomies and electroshock therapy. In recent years, the most-used treatment has become powerful drugs.

Thirty years ago politics and budget battles, liberation movements, changing attitudes toward psychiatry and social welfare and community responsibility all came together and resulted in the closure of many of these huge institutions. Their patients were discharged into the community. The idea was that a wide array of community facilities offering different levels of support, depending on the specific needs of the clients, would be a more humane and efficient way of caring for mentally disabled people. Community-based housing and support services (such as counseling, therapy and assistance with requirements of daily living) were supposed to enable disabled persons to lead lives of independence and dignity.

But it didn't happen that way. For people who are poor and who don't have families with the resources to provide for private care, both housing and support services are woefully inadequate. The types of assisted-living facilities that are available and the services that are offered in community settings are more likely to be organized for the convenience of the people who run them rather than for the real needs of the clients.

Sally Zinman is the director of the Coalition for Alternatives in Mental Health, generally called the Berkeley Drop-in Center, a client-run facility offering a variety of services to people who are mentally ill, including many who are homeless. She expresses the frustration and anger of many people with mental disabilities at the fact that they are forced to accept what the system offers. "Our problem is with forced treatment, in the community or in institutions," she said, "forced drugging without people's informed consent." Furthermore, Zinman expressed strong "objections about the use of the medical model of mental illness instead of seeing people's real reactions to real situations and life problems."



Building community **at the Berkeley Drop-In Center.** Lydia Gans photo

When individuals who are mentally ill are in a crisis, they are involuntarily committed, or "5150'd", into a locked psychiatric facility for a maximum of 72 hours during which time they are heavily medicated to get the symptoms under control. Then they might be kept another 14 days before a long-term decision is made about their care. Those people who respond "appropriately" and/or get assistance from a patient advocate are released with their medications and some sort of arrangements for follow-up care.

Unfortunately, the follow-up arrangements are often very inadequate and the medications, because they cause so many unpleasant side effects, soon end up in a trash can. Trudy, a client at the Berkeley Drop-in Center, describes the effects of the drugs she was given at John George Psychiatric Pavilion in San Leandro (where she went for help of her own free will). "They induced hallucinations.... They made me so sick that I freaked out." Even when she was released from the hospital, she says, "I was zooming at light speed. Couldn't focus, brain racing, couldn't sleep, couldn't eat." She went over to San Francisco and "I threw all my stuff off the Bay Bridge" — and the medications into the garbage.



Sally Zinman **is a long-time advocate for the rights of mental-health clients.** Lydia Gans photo

This sudden, cold-turkey withdrawal forces a patient's system to decompensate. They end up in a worse condition than before, both mentally and physically. At this point, just when they are most vulnerable and unable to take care of themselves, problems with other people, such as landlords or housemates, often escalate. The person is likely to become homeless until they are picked up again, either by the mental-health system or by the police.

There is little difference between the hospital and the jail, explained Tony, another person at the Drop-in Center, adding that "only in jail they can't force drugs on you. The mental health institution, if you get out of line they can restrain you, give you Thorazine to keep you quieted down."

Looking at the question of "which comes first" from the other side, though there are certainly plenty of homeless people who are not mentally ill, there is evidence that long-term homelessness may eventually result in mental instability. For those of us who have never been homeless it is hard to imagine how stressful life is in on the streets.

It's not just a matter of finding a safe place to sleep every night, it involves having access to showers and laundry facilities, obtaining clothing and personal care articles, having quiet locations indoors or outdoors to relax and be private. Sleep deprivation is profoundly injurious to the most stable person's psychological well-being. Most difficult to obtain, and most debilitating to go without, are regular, nutritious meals.

The homeless person has to be constantly alert to what is available, where and when. It means walking all over town or securing bus tickets to get to the services during the times that they are operating. Meals are served at various locations on different days of the week at odd hours. During the long time between meal hours, people have to stave off their hunger with drop-in centers' offerings of coffee, chips or donuts, hardly a diet that helps a person to function well.

All in all, there is constant tension created by the difficulty of simply securing the basic necessities of everyday living. Poor diet and being exposed to bad weather will cause physical deterioration. There is the loss of self esteem because of the stigma attached to being homeless and "different" in the eyes of society. And the feelings of insecurity because life is so unstable make it hard to get and keep good friends. All this is extraordinarily stressful.

Of course people who are not homeless are stressed too. They can be plagued with anxiety about their health, relationships, job insecurity, etc., but they have a choice of professionals they can turn to for help. They can see a mental health counselor, a physician, a nutritionist or any of a huge variety of alternative and holistic health practitioners. Whoever they see, they can expect to be treated respectfully, their problems acknowledged and treatment offered — but not forced on them. If they are not satisfied they can go somewhere else. The homeless person facing a crisis has none of these options. They can't even get housing offered to other poor people without the added indignity of being forced to accept "help", that is, someone else's idea of help.

The only relief that is accessible, that can be secured without having to accept being treated like a child, an inferior or an outcast, is alcohol and street drugs. Ultimately, if the stress itself doesn't grind a person down, the alcohol or drugs soon will. Wendy Georges, who directs the multi-service center at Trinity Methodist Church, points out that "living in the streets means living in an addictive culture". The brain and central nervous system deteriorate and the person is less and less able to function and eventually may develop the symptoms of mental illness.

Whatever the nature and causes of the mental disability, no two peoples' needs are exactly the same. But for those who are poor, the system does not offer appropriate treatment adjusted and tailored to the specific needs of each individual. In the absence of careful monitoring and adjustment of the doses of anti-psychotic and tranquilizing drugs, people are likely to be over-medicated. Other therapies, those that require more time with specialized mental health professionals, are limited.

According to Stanley Grumet, an advocate at the Berkeley Drop-in Center, the psychiatric establishment's approach to treatment seems to be to "put as little resources into it as possible, make things as convenient for everybody else as possible.... They don't get much attention but a lot of medication."

Stanley echoes Sally Zinman's objections to the coerciveness of the system. Both contend that patients are not even given the option to select or refuse drugs or treatment. That is why some people choose to stay outside of the psychiatric system, even if it means being homeless. They know living on the street is dangerous, that they can get hurt by others or hurt themselves. Sally speaks from personal knowledge and years of experience when she says, "People are really choosing freedom with their life, because homelessness can kill you."

DOLLY

"Dolly still had only one thought after leaving the county psychiatric hospital, and that was to get back to the house which she and her mother once owned, and back to her cat. After all, it had been theirs."

Story by Dennis Herman

A taxi pulled up in front of one of the nicer hotels in the downtown portion of the city. Two hospital workers, nurses aides, emerged from the back seat. One carried a small suitcase while the other helped a very bent woman on crutches out onto the sidewalk and into the hotel lobby. This particular hotel would be much too expensive for Dolly to stay any length of time.

Dolly was in her forties and was crippled with arthritis. She had just come from spending two months for observation in the psychiatric ward of the county hospital. On the two crutches she walked at a loping snail's pace. A social worker would be by later on in the week to relocate her to a more affordable place to live.

Dolly lived on a social security check. Her family was dead. She had been to high school, didn't work after that, at least she never mentioned ever having done so, and had lived with her mother. They had had a cat.

She was very skinny, humped back from the disease. Her hair was a stringy black and she always wore lipstick on her pinched, wrinkled lips. When she did smile though, Dolly had the smile of a young girl.

After she was relocated and settled in the cheaper hotel, down by the Continental bus station, most of the staff there kept an eye on her, a kindly eye. The hotel was old and was being renovated mostly for the lower-class tourist trade. Its tenants consisted mainly of young secretaries with new jobs in the city and businessmen with less extravagant expense accounts. The lobby was torn up so Dolly went down to the bus station to watch the coin-operated televisions. She had been incensed at having been sent to the psychiatric ward in the first place.

Her room in the hotel was clean, a bit faded but clean. It contained a pale green carpet, a bed with a nice spread, and a semi-modern white chest of drawers. It had no view except for the grimy hotel rooms across the air well. Her only possession, save her clothes, was a varnished plywood "key" inlaid with hooks which she had made during her stay in the psychiatric ward. She had to borrow a Timex watch from the social worker because she had no way of telling the time. One of the maids stole it. Dolly bought an even cheaper watch out of her social security check in order to return something to the social worker.

The downtown of the city began to grow on Dolly. Whether this was the first time she had ever lived there any length of time, no one seemed to know. She liked to tell, though, of how she and her mother had come down on the bus. Dolly knew the bus line, the bus line from their house. She even would reminisce of how she had come down to the library to study when she was in high school. She loved walking past the myriad of small dime stores and browsing outside the windows. Her favorite was a Chinese souvenir shop, and she loved to point out the tea set that she and her mother once had in their house.

She would have to admit that she liked eating out, Chinese food, mom and pop take out, the blue plate special. How she ever got up the strength and energy to go out three times a day to eat, stop by the windows and then just walk all the blocks of the downtown which she said she did, was a mystery, but she did it!

Dolly liked giving gifts and receiving them. At Christmas time she enjoyed buying a variety of small gifts, cheap perfumes and colorful plastic bouquets of flowers for the social workers. Dolly needed a coat, so one of the workers was able to get a hold of one twenty years out of style. Dolly knew it was old, but she recognized the cut as having been quite fashionable. Upon accepting it, she carefully draped it over her contorted shoulders. The color matched her lipstick.

Dolly still had only one thought after leaving the county hospital, and that was to get back to the house which she and her mother had once owned, and back to her cat. After all, it had been theirs.



Contrast

by Virginia K. Anderson

Her children live with hunger
her man is imprisoned
she wanders in search of shelter

I enjoy lunch with a friend
stroll in the park with my husband
dream and write poetry

MEMOS FROM A CHURCH SECRETARY:

Frank

by Virginia K. Anderson

He was always hungry, he said,
drifting in and out all day.

He muttered (sometimes in Latin)
chuckling at his clever phrases
occasionally glancing our way
briefly responding to questions.

He wandered around the building
dribbling coffee, soup
until we told him firmly
he must stay in the office
while eating.

He did, using three or four cups
One apiece for soup, cocoa, coffee —
the corner always a shambles
of spilt cocoa, soup packets, spoons.
We bought him an extra large cup.
He studied it, liked the blue flowers
on the side.
And the corner began to be clean.

The first of each month
he received a check. He paid
us then for what he'd consumed
tossing a bill on the desk
like a grandee.
And disappear for a week
until he'd lavished the rest.
Then he'd be back as before
sleeping outdoors — who knew where?

At Christmas
Emily brought him cookies.
"Are they made with eggs?
I'm a vegetarian!"
But he ate them because she'd
brought them
leaving one on the plate untasted
for penance.

That was the last time we saw him.
The holidays passed, and we wondered
in the midst of our families
where and how he was.

Weeks later someone heard
he'd had trouble with police,
gone back to Boston.
To Boston — to what? we wondered.

He was a bother
but we'd grown used to him.

EYES UP

By Tom Lehmkuhl

The days grow cold and fall hard upon our brothers and sisters who wander the streets. And we sit warmly by the fire.

They sit on the comers with outstretched hands seeking not alms but recognition of their humanness, their desperation. And we pass by, eyes down, lest we see them.

Weariness and rejection push them to escape in drink. And we are critical as we enjoy our nightly cocktail, well deserved after a hard day.

They crowd into shelters at night, the lucky ones.
Seventy men in one room ensures that they know not the meaning of privacy. And the empty rooms of our homes echo nothing.

All day they have longed for this mattress on the concrete floor and now it is theirs for a few hours. And we settle down in our king-sized beds to watch the ten o'clock news.

Not by choice, they are out of the shelter early only to repeat yesterday while we anticipate the newness of each day.

We spend billions for defense against a threat that is no longer, yet we can't find the money to build housing for the homeless. And we are proud of our country.

What can we do, we ask ourselves, the government is unresponsive. And we pour hundreds of millions into the care and feeding of our pets.

We lay claim to be the most civilized nation in the world. Are there any doubters? Come walk with me but keep your eyes up.

Mobilizing the Homeless Vote

from page one

we'll go back into those same areas with literature about initiatives and other issues."

Outreach workers have been going into Berkeley shelters in the evenings, before residents' councils or as a part of life-skill classes. "The idea is to get people registered, then get them out to the polls," Thomas explained.

He noted that it is necessary to focus outreach at different service centers, since it is difficult to get clients to move from one agency to another for presentations. "We're planning voter workshops at St. Mary's and at service centers, trying to get people to come to a couple of places, and to have the candidates come out," he said. "It's nothing fancy, just getting out at night and talking to folks."

Another group doing intensive voter registration among low-income populations is the Berkeley Ecumenical Chaplaincy to the Homeless. Working with the St. Mary's Senior Center, the Chaplaincy has sponsored a bus-billboard campaign encouraging low-income riders to register and vote. The billboards, produced by the Public Media Center in San Francisco and featuring a graphic by local artist Ace Backwords, were unveiled in early September, and are being carried on 250 East Bay Transit buses through the fall election.

The billboards carry the slogan, "Pray for Compassion, Vote for Hope", and urge people to "Vote and Let Your Voice Rise Up". The project was endorsed by ten key religious bodies in the East Bay.

Tanya Brown, a formerly homeless resident of the Chaplaincy's Haste Street transitional house, said, "Many of the cuts the government is making are going to affect people on the streets, so if we don't make our voices heard, we can't make any positive changes."

Brown, who is now House Manager at the Haste Street house, said that voting is a tool for making people aware that "homeless people count". She said that she got involved because "I believe in working for the community".

According to Sally Hindman, staff for the Chaplaincy, the group's goal is to register 500 new voters, focusing on key districts in south and west Berkeley and among local homeless people. "We're encouraging people to vote for candidates who support compassion and justice for all people, including the poor," she said.

The Chaplaincy, which has 17 member congregations, including Buddhists, Christians and Jews, is working on this campaign through its community organizing arm, the Berkeley Religious Coalition with the Homeless.

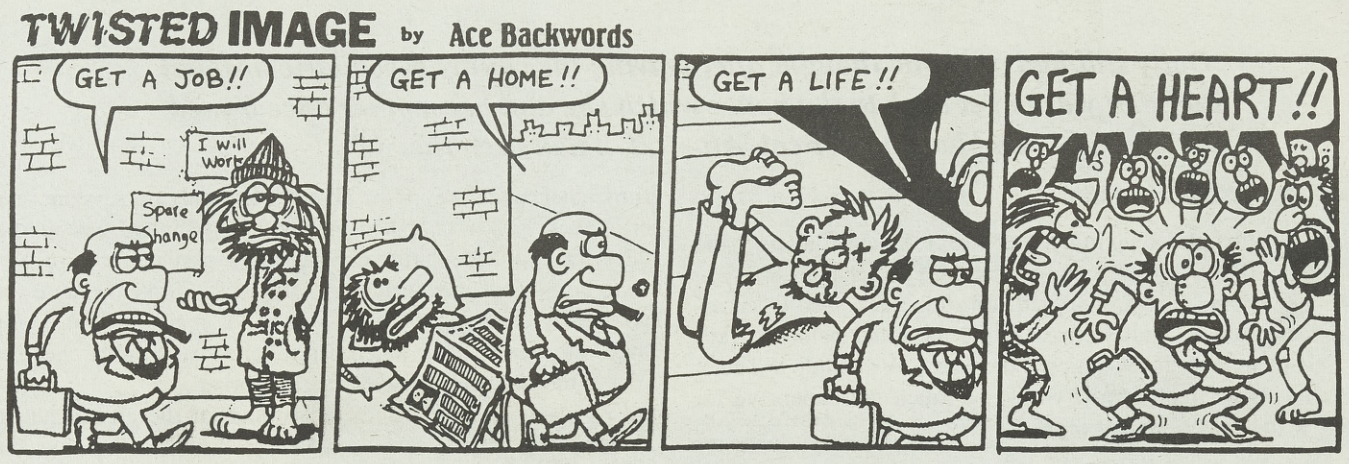
Hindman emphasized that "our nonpartisan educational efforts are geared towards encouraging the public to think critically about candidates and issues. Voter involvement will have an enormous impact at the local level. We have the ability to move the Berkeley City Council toward more just decisions involving the poor," including housing issues. Precinct walking is planned for November 4, election day.

BOSS, Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, has a Community Organizing Team which is also going to different shelters and service sites, holding informational meetings and working to get out the vote.

To get involved in the get-out-the-vote efforts among homeless people, call the Chaplaincy at 548-0551, or ESN at 451-3138.

When Journalism Stoops to Homeless Bashing

Quarnstrom's descriptions of homeless persons include "leeches", "shiftless cronies", "bums", "street scum", "pieces of garbage", "motley gang", "human detritus" and "flesh-eating bacteria trying to infect Santa Cruz". And this passes for journalism in what should be a respected and trusted paper.



by Becky Johnson

Lee Quarnstrom, columnist for the Santa Cruz edition of the *San Jose Mercury News,* has sunk to a new low in his already tattered history of writing about the homeless and the poor. Those who have the misfortune of falling within eyeshot of Mr. Quarnstrom are likely to have their morality, personal integrity and even their right to exist questioned and impugned by his words.

In two recent columns in the *San Jose Mercury News* (August 26 and September 9), Quarnstrom's descriptions of homeless persons include "leeches", "shiftless cronies", "bums", "street scum", "pieces of garbage", "motley gang", "human detritus", "layabouts", and "flesh-eating bacteria trying to infect Santa Cruz". And this passes for journalism in what should be a respected and trusted paper.

Quarnstrom 's obvious distaste for homeless activist Robert Norse Kahn is evident in his derogatory title of "King of the Bums." It is unprofessional at best and criminal at worst to use the power of his column to personally malign a private citizen, with concocted stories, inflammatory pejoratives and few real facts. When Robert was jailed for 28 days this summer for having served bagels to homeless people, Quarnstrom wrote nothing. But his recent diatribe accused Robert for not getting arrested at a Santa Cruz protest!

And in two recent columns, he accuses a group of Campbell Street residents who fought their eviction of having "flung buckets of urine" on the police who had arrived to handcuff and arrest them. Since no such events ever happened, it is irresponsible in the extreme to publish that they had. I personally was at Campbell Street the day of the eviction in my capacity as a video-journalist for a Community Access Television station. Karen Clark of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* was also at the scene. Why she reported what she did is a mystery to me. Dozens of witnesses observed a police officer dropping some gallon-sized plastic jugs filled with urine from an upstairs roof to the sidewalk below, where they, of course, broke, splattering urine everywhere. I have videotape of this.

Two days after Quarnstrom's column appeared, a homeless man was brutally beaten underneath a bridge. Quarnstrom's rhetoric leads to vigilante "trollbusting" by fanning the flames of hatred against the poor souls who happen to be homeless. I spoke with Quarnstrom on September 9 and asked him directly if he thought his column had anything to do with attacks on the homeless. He denied any responsibility for these violent assaults.

I spoke with Theodora Kerrey, a local hemp activist, about comments attributed to her in Quarnstrom's column. "I was used," she replied.

Missing from Quarnstrom's article was that the eviction made 20 people homeless. Missing were reports of unnecessary roughness used by the police in making the arrests. Missing was any information about the youth arrested who had his hands too tightly bound. The police took nearly 13 minutes to loosen his bindings as bystanders begged Lt. Joe Haebe to intervene before any permanent nerve damage took place. Missing was any information about serious allegations of negligence and scalping committed by the owners of the building, Donna and Forrest Moore. Missing was any information about the larger problem of lack of affordable housing in Santa Cruz, in which only 5.6% of housing is considered long-term affordable.

Vilifying, dehumanizing and blaming a whole class of people is a time-honored tactic with brutal, militaristic regimes. In other times and places, this kind of scapegoating has led to boxcars and death camps. Is this the sort of journalism that the *San Jose Mercury News* is willing to tolerate? Are these the ideas a respected paper should promote? I believe the only course of action the paper has the option of taking is to stop publishing the character-assassination-disguised-as-reporting of Lee Quarnstrom.

Santa Cruz Arrests

from page one

SJMN columnist Lee Quarnstrom described homeless protesters as "Human Garbage", "pathetic parasites", "self-anointed revolutionary bums", "crumb-bums who have no friends", and (last but not least) "flesh-eating bacteria."

Channel 35, on the other hand, followed the demonstration all the way from its "soup-crime" at the Town Clock to a march down the Pacific Avenue mall, to half an hour of sharp, incisive speeches, to the chaining of the protesters.

Mayor Rotkin denounced the demonstrators as "fascists" for interrupting the "democratic" process. Rotkin is the swing vote on the Sleeping Ban and has never agreed to have the issue on the agenda throughout his 12 years on the Council. On September 17, activists responded with a televised press conference of their own — an hour-long event that included activists, attorneys and academics. Inflated city expenditures were ridiculed and media distortions analyzed.

Meanwhile, Council members nominally sympathetic to the homeless (like Katherine Beiers and Celia Scott) refuse to put the Sleeping Ban up for a vote before the November election and decline to direct city staff to inquire into costs and savings for an amnesty on sleeping tickets.

With fall elections coming closer and closer, activists are looking to local labor activist David Minton Silva and feminist/environmentalist Kristin Anderson to replace Mayor Mike Rotkin and Vice Mayor Cynthia Matthews, two inveterate opponents of human rights for the poor.

At a recent Downtown Association forum, Matthews called for lengthy lock-ups for street people who run afoul of the anti-homeless Downtown Ordinances, which she and Rotkin voted in two years ago. These laws ban sitting near a shop, peacefully asking for spare change at night, and setting up a protest table after dark. At the same forum, Rotkin favorably remarked that the city was planting flowers along fences, previously legal areas where homeless people could sit without being harassed by the merchant-funded "Hosts" and arrested by the police. Flower beds will henceforth replace the unsightly homeless people who formerly could legally sit down.

Rotkin himself was literally dunked and quietly pressured out of the Labor Day workers rally. The Peace and Freedom Party endorsed Silva and Anderson and called for an end to the Sleeping Ban. Unfortunately other powerful groups like SCAN, the NAACP and the Downtown Association have endorsed "revolving-door" establishment candidates, who have repeatedly voted against basic rights for the homeless.

Miguel Baideros, a high-profile vigil supporter, is an African-American activist on parole for a burglary charge that actually involved taking shelter from Sleeping Ban cops and trollbusters in an abandoned house in 1991. In early September, his parole was revoked on groundless charges and he was held in jail for 12 days.

A sympathizer in the Metro Transit Center policing force reported he was under increased pressure to harass and drive away homeless-looking people. Mayor Mike Rotkin is also head of the Transit Board. Young people face the renewed threat of a youth curfew (the county got one this spring), as would-be City Council candidates call for "taking back our streets!" — blaming the current economic crisis on drugs and bums.

Meanwhile, the city has witnessed a much ballyhooed fundraising effort to respond to the "homelessness crisis" through united action by merchants, activists, politicians and service-providers to establish an emergency youth sleeping shelter. The proposed shelter site, we now learn, is located far out of town, will have a warrant-checking program, and will focus on the usual Cadillac-services-for-a-few rather than emergency shelter for young people who need it. Naturally this means more jobs for contractors and middle-class bureaucrats, razzle-dazzle feel-good publicity for businesses and office seekers, and no significant new services for the majority of homeless people.

But the high-profile protest in City Hall and the continued nightly vigil in front of it has had a tangible impact. The morning after the protest, Officer Evelith attacked the vigil anew with sleeping tickets, a ticket for displaying signs and a new "sit-on-the-wall, pay-a-fine" citation. Within days, police on horseback with dogs reportedly swept the riverbanks and the forests, destroying campsites and confiscating property. The word spread among some old-timers in the homeless community that the raids were punishment for the high-profile September 10th protest.

On the positive side, word is out that Councilmember Scott Kennedy has taken action. Kennedy calls himself an opponent of the Sleeping Ban but he has never taken action to annul or amend it. Now, it seems, he has drawn up a plan to open up an alternate sleeping area. For many, this is one step forward, two steps backward, since it took the homeless two years to win the right to put up tents and keep them up during the day at the Coral St. Open Air shelter (which Kennedy himself helped to close last December). Details are sketchy, but reports indicate that those without shelter will have to disappear at dawn under Kennedy's plan.

"Zen" Hearst is now in jail, after having been taken into custody on a misdemeanor sleep-crime ticket. Anthony Palanjo, a steadfast sleeper when others fled to the bushes, has left for the north. Back in town: old-timers Scott, Shannon, and their one-legged dog Weasel; "Spittin' Kitten", who recently bared her breasts to protest the police seizure of a "Hosts" T-shirt by police (she *gave* her shirt to the man whose shirt was confiscated); and, finally, Rainbow Life (or Loudmouth Leith, as we used to call him), an old-timer who went to jail in 1990 as part of the 8 1/2 month-long Post Office Homeless Vigil.

Each Saturday at 2 p.m., supporters march from the Town Clock through the downtown to support the sleepers. Each Thursday at 6 p.m., activists meet at What Is Art (2044 North Pacific Avenue) to plan new, more creative attacks on the Sleeping Ban. And every night in front of City Hall, as the weather turns colder, homeless vigilers illegally cover up with blankets in front of City Hall to show the city and the world that they will not leave until their job is done.

For more information, call: HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship & Freedom) (408) 423-HUFF; Revolutionary Coalition (408) 421-9250.

To make contributions: c/o HUFF, 309 Cedar St., Suite 14B, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Love and Homelessness

from page one

baby's birth, but also so she can safely seek medical help and other services without fear of her child being taken from her.

There is a deep bonding between Tama and Gideon. Their tenderness for each other, and the love they have, is sweet to behold. Both look forward to their new family, and would like to have a homebirth with a midwife, if they can first find a home.

Anyone who can donate services as a midwife, lay or otherwise, please leave a message for Tama at (408) 423-4833. Money, donations, job opportunities in Japanese food, and especially housing located in the Santa Cruz area are greatly appreciated. Please help.

Clinton and Brown: A Tale of Two Betrayals



Art by Osha Neumann

Editorial by Terry Messman

"*I support the left, so I'm leaning, leaning to the right.*" That cynical verse from Cream's song "Politician" offers a mocking insight into the otherwise incomprehensible betrayal of poor people by President Bill Clinton and S.F. Mayor Willie Brown in the past several weeks.

First, on August 22, Clinton signed a "welfare reform" bill that dismembered Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and shipped its pieces back to the states to administer as block grants. Clinton's welfare bill also gives states the right to deny AFDC benefits to legal immigrants, who also are now ineligible for food stamps. This so-called reform is an even more profound betrayal than it looks, for Clinton knows full well that in many states, Republican governors are eagerly awaiting their chance to add as many punitive restrictions as they can to further diminish what's left of AFDC benefits.

In California, Clinton's "reform" means that AFDC block grants will be turned over to Gov. Pete Wilson and Social Services Director Eloise Anderson to administer — the fate of poor families is thus placed in the hands of conservative Republicans who have publicly stated their desire to entirely eliminate AFDC. Clinton is like a sheep dog handing over his flock to the wolves.

Then, on September 16, Willie Brown canceled his long-promised summit on homelessness, telling *S.F. Chronicle* reporter John King that the problem of homelessness "may not be solvable", and admitting that he had taken no new initiatives to help the homeless community in his first nine months in office. Worse still, Brown has also backed out of his repeated promises to end the Matrix program launched by his predecessor, Frank Jordan. After vowing that he would order San Francisco police to stop criminalizing poor people, Brown instead has merely ordered his department heads to stop using the dread name "Matrix". Meanwhile, out on the streets, police have escalated their crackdown on the homeless community.

A Liar? Or a Republican?

Thus, in the past few weeks, poor people have suffered two acts of wrenching betrayal by a liberal, Democratic mayor and a Democratic president. What do you call a liberal politician who breaks every promise ever made about fair and compassionate treatment for poor people? A liar? Or a Republican?

When liberal Democrats forsake their deepest principles and sell out the poor, they are indeed "supporting the left by leaning, leaning to the right". But Clinton and Brown are leaning way too far these days. They have surrendered unconditionally to the right, and bought into all of its demonizing attacks on welfare mothers, homeless people and legal immigrants.

And to some extent, progressives themselves appear to have bought the arguments of Brown and Clinton that they had to sell out homeless people and families on AFDC to appease the presumed anti-poor bias of the electorate. Have our political values become so debased that we can allow Brown and Clinton to sell out their core principles and inflict great harm on the poorest of the poor, all in a cynical ploy to get re-elected? Have we now become as cynical and opportunistic as the power-politicians, supporting them on the pragmatic grounds that they are electable, even as they take on the worst aspects of the homeless-bashing, welfare-slashing right wing?

The Promises of Willie Brown

Willie Brown was elected mayor after promising San Francisco voters that he would solidly support the human rights of the poor and end Matrix. In meetings with homeless advocacy groups both before and after his election, Brown repeatedly vowed to stop fining and arresting homeless people for sleeping outdoors, covering up with a blanket or sitting on a city sidewalk. I was at those meetings, and I heard those promises.

Now, after nine months in office, Brown has utterly betrayed his promises. He not only failed to end Matrix-style harassment, but, incredibly, he has presided over an *escalation* — the Brown Administration has actually increased the already staggering number of arrests and citations that homeless people suffered under former Mayor Jordan.

Statistics gathered by Religious Witness with Homeless People, the Coalition On Homelessness and the *Chronicle* show that S.F. police issued 5,124 citations for the five core Matrix offenses this past summer under Brown, compared to only 3,146 in the summer of 1995. Citations have increased during Brown's reign for such Matrix offenses as sleeping in parks, camping, obstructing the sidewalk, public urination and drinking in public.

Homeless advocates caught on early to the duplicitous nature of Brown's promises to end Matrix. Immediately after Brown declared an amnesty on Matrix busts in late February, 1996, members of Religious Witness with Homeless People and the Coalition on Homelessness met with Brown's appointed police chief, Fred Lau, to seek assurances that Matrix truly was going to be dismantled.

Chief Lau was evasive from the start. After announcing that Matrix was "dead and buried", Lau told the homeless advocates that the police would still enforce all the laws at their disposal, including the laws that made up the Matrix program under Jordan — a dead give-away that Matrix was going to be continued with a wink and a nod. The report of Matrix's demise was greatly exaggerated — it died in name only.

In fact, the only real promise that Lau and Brown have kept is to stop using the word "Matrix" in public. After all, it was a public-relations albatross for Jordan, so Brown simply jettisoned the name. "A rose by any other name..." But this ain't a rose, and cruelty still smells rotten whether it's called Matrix or not.

Clinton Does What Reagan Never Dared

AFDC was initiated as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal to help poor families survive the Great Depression. For 61 years, AFDC has stood as a sign of this nation's commitment to children caught in poverty that they will not be utterly abandoned to the living hell of hunger, joblessness and homelessness. President Clinton sold out millions of poor children and women by discarding this 61-year-old promise to provide at least a minimal income to ensure the survival of low-income families. Clinton's "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act" dismantles the basic lifeline to poor families.

The American people voted for a Democratic president, but what they got was a craven opportunist who ash-canned the legacy of FDR and every Democratic president since. In his zeal to court the "moderate" vote in an election year, Clinton transformed himself into a crypto-Republican who pulled off a feat that no Republican president has even dared to try — the shredding of the nation's most important safety net for poor children. AFDC survived Bush, Reagan and Nixon, but it couldn't survive Clinton.

Not to worry, though. We should all swallow our pride and support Clinton anyway, because if elected, he may work to soften the blow of some of the cruelest provisions of the welfare reform bill he just signed into law. Yeah, right — as if we can believe that line any more than all the other promises that were later deep-sixed when they proved inconvenient to his re-election chances.

It just is not acceptable that Clinton sold out the nation's poorest families for his own political advantage. It's equally intolerable that Willie Brown looked us all in the eye last February, and spoke soothing words about the end of Matrix. And assured us that homeless people would no longer be arrested for sleeping outdoors or covering up with a blanket. And then betrayed his vows.

When the chips were down, when homeless people and poor families were under attack by every right-wing demagogue in the land, Willie Brown and Bill Clinton refused to stick up for them in their darkest hour.

Historian Howard Zinn of Boston University recently declared that strong social-change movements are more crucial to reforming injustices than are electoral politics. Zinn pointed out that *both* the Democrats and the Republicans escalated the Vietnam War, and that it took an independent peace movement to stand in resistance to war crimes. Similarly, *both* the Democrats and the Republicans have launched inhumane attacks on the poor. A true human-rights movement should confront *any* political leader, Democrat or Republican, who tears asunder the safety net or unleashes the police against the homeless.

I Want To Move Inside

by Andrew Hayes

I want to move inside
where the spiritually dead
don't bury the dead bodies
on the streets of the Americas
I want to reclaim that inner
landscape where God hides out
Buried beneath the rotting flesh
of consumer terrorism
I want to dance with
my Buddha childhood divinity
breathing ecstasy through
each being I meet on the streets
of our emerging world
I want to dump the garbage
of my brainwashed tortured body
out onto the Whitehouse lawn
so the President can wash his sins free
I want to feel my body alive
fully inhabited by my spirit
The numbness dark void erased
My eyes wide open playful
child smiling again
I want it now for everyone
and we don't want to wait any longer

Street Spirit

Justice News & Homeless Blues in the East Bay

Volume 2, Number 10
October, 1996

Street Spirit is a monthly newspaper reporting on homelessness, poverty and economic justice in the Bay Area. **Street Spirit** is published by the Homeless Organizing Project of the **American Friends Service Committee. The Berkeley Ecumenical Chaplaincy to the Homeless** coordinates the vendor program.

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Street Spirit welcomes articles and art but cannot guarantee they will be printed. Please keep your own copy of any work you send. **Send articles to: Street Spirit, 1611 Telegraph Ave. #1501, Oakland, CA 94612. Phone: (510) 238-8080**

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Robert N. Zimmerman: for the poems "After Harvest" and "Panhandlers" © 1996.

Preserve Vacant Presidio Housing for Homeless Citizens

by Sister Bernie Galvin, cdp

If the hopes and dreams of poor and homeless people for decent, affordable housing are to become a reality, they must become the collective dream of us all. Indeed, the soul of this community is rising to lay claim to this dream.

At a time when San Francisco is undergoing a growing homeless crisis, we must join together to speak out against the demolition of hundreds of homes at the Presidio's Wherry Housing Complex that could provide life-saving shelter to homeless citizens. We cannot allow homeless people to suffer and die for lack of shelter when buildings which could house them sit empty and abandoned.

It is time for our elected officials to act to halt the demolition of Wherry Housing, and convert these structurally sound, vacant Presidio units into permanent and/or transitional housing for homeless residents of San Francisco.

Religious Witness with Homeless People is building a strong coalition of the interfaith community, labor unions and community organizations in an effort to preserve 466 housing units in the Presidio.

This campaign of Religious Witness has inspired an enormous outpouring of support. **Already, over 185 organizations and over 1,000 individuals have endorsed our plan to preserve and convert Wherry Housing.** The endorsers listed below are only a small sample of the incredibly broad support that our Presidio housing plans have elicited.

NONVIOLENT ACTION FOR SANCTUARY AT THE PRESIDIO

Join the interfaith community, labor unions and community organizations in protesting the demolition of the Presidio's Wherry Housing Complex!



This lovely home, located in the Presidio's Wherry Housing, would make an ideal sanctuary for homeless families. Your action can help prevent the demolition of these wonderful dwellings!

OCTOBER 13
SUNDAY 2 PM

BETH SHOLOM SYNAGOGUE

1301 Clement at 14th Avenue in San Francisco
(Free parking along 14th Ave. and adjoining streets)

INTERFAITH SERVICE AND MARCH TO THE PRESIDIO

Sponsored by **Religious Witness with Homeless People** Phone: (415) 885-6401

The Prayer and Action for Sanctuary at the Presidio on October 13 presents an opportunity for all of us to come together to put our faith and love in action. It is with a deep sense of urgency that we call for your commitment to this Prayer/Action. This event will demonstrate to the decision-makers the degree of support that already exists for the conversion of Wherry Housing.

Religious Witness asks all concerned people who want to find a positive alternative to the deepening problem of homelessness to work with the faith community to promote this humanitarian effort.

In that spirit, we ask individuals and organizations to carefully read and endorse the following statement. **Please send your endorsement to:** Religious Witness with Homeless People, P.O. Box 420486, San Francisco, CA 94142-0486, or phone (415) 885-6401.

We Resolve to Offer Sanctuary at the Presidio for Homeless People

Mindful of the suffering of more than 12,000 homeless residents of San Francisco who are forced to compete for only 1,400 shelter beds in our city; and

Mindful of the tragedy that more than 1,000 homeless people have died in San Francisco in the past 10 years, including the record 142 who died in our city last year; and

Mindful of our city's acute and worsening housing shortage for low-income and homeless citizens, caused by the cutbacks of federal housing dollars, the demolition of public housing and the escalating rents which have made San Francisco one of the most expensive rental-housing markets in the nation; and

Mindful of the fact that nearly 600 structurally sound homes are being demolished at the Presidio, an act of injustice that will destroy an irreplaceable housing resource that could go a long way towards lessening the suffering of our homeless citizens; and

Mindful that it cost taxpayers a shocking $1,389,000 to demolish only the first 11 buildings at Wherry Housing, and will cost several million dollars more to demolish hundreds more units — money which should be used to create housing, not destroy it;

Now, therefore, be it resolved:

1) We endorse the aspirations of Religious Witness with Homeless People to halt the demolition of the remaining 466 housing units at the Wherry Housing complex;

2) We support the efforts of Religious Witness to convert Wherry Housing into transitional and/or permanent housing for homeless people, including military veterans and homeless families;

3) We call upon city and federal officials to turn over vacant Wherry Housing units to nonprofit housing development agencies that would provide housing for homeless residents, as well as property management and support services; and

4) We support jobs and job-training programs at the Presidio to benefit homeless people who move into Wherry Housing. We call for the greatest possible participation of homeless people in designing these housing programs, including serving on the boards of nonprofit agencies, participating in sweat equity programs and obtaining gainful employment in this entire project.

The resolution to convert Presidio housing has been endorsed by over 185 organizations and 1,000 individuals, including the following:

Individual Endorsements:

Rev. Dr. Amos Brown
Third Baptist Church

Rev. Dr. Cecil Williams
Glide Memorial Church

Rev. Matthew Fox
Creation Spirituality Theologian

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop, Detroit Archdiocese

Thich Nhat Hanh
Buddhist Monk, Peacemaker

Daniel Ellsberg
Peace and disarmament activist

Rabbi Alan Lew
Congregation Beth Sholom

Bishop Melvin Talbert
Bishop of United Methodist Church, President, National Council of Churches

Bishop Leontine Kelly
United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Robert McAfee Brown
Professor Emeritus, Theology and Ethics, Pacific School of Religion

Supervisor Sue Bierman
S.F. Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Angela Alioto
S.F. Board of Supervisors

Rev. Jim Lowder, Director
Habitat for Humanity

Rev. Lee Williamson
Wesley United Methodist Church

Organizational Endorsements:

American Friends Service Committee
Wilson Riles, Jr., Director

American Jewish Congress
Tracy Salkowitz, Director

Bay Area Organizing Committee
Sister Kathleen Healy, Director

Bay Area Pax Christi
Daniel McNassar, Coordinator

Berkeley Emergency Food and Housing Project
Patricia St. Onges, Director

Buddhist Peace Fellowship
Alan Senauke, National Coordinator

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
Margaret Brodkin, Executive Director

California Nurses Association
Donna Gerber, Staff Director

California Province of Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
Rev. Jack Mitchell, sj

United Methodist Church California/Nevada Conference
Rev. Sharon Delgado, Chair

Council of Community Housing Organizations
Rene Cazenave, Director
Calvin Welch

Coalition on Homelessness
Paul Boden, Director

Community Homeless Alliance
Scott Wagers, Chair

Berkeley Ecumenical Chaplaincy to the Homeless
Sally Hindman, Director

Sisters of the Presentation
Sister Rosina Conrotto, President

Sisters of Mercy
Mercy Justice Coordinator
Sister Marueen Hally, rsm

Sisters of Divine Providence
Sister Imelda Maurer, cdp

Sisters of the Holy Names
Sister Sally Slyngstad, snjm

Earth First!
Judi Bari

First Congregational Church
Rev. Jim Lawer, Senior Minister

First United Lutheran Church
Rev. Jeff Johnson, Pastor

Franciscan Affinity Group
Wendy Kaufmyn

General Assistance Advocacy Project
Chris Morosoff, Co-Director

Homebase
Martha Fleetwood, Executive Director

Homeless in Action
Bob King, Co-Director

Homeless Organizing Project
American Friends Service Committee
Terry Messman, Coordinator

Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, Local 2
Tho Do, Secretary-Treasurer

Interfaith Council on Economic Justice, Northern California Ecumenical Council
Sydney Thomson Brown, Chair

Janitors Union, Local 87
Erica Zweig, Community Organizer

Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
Rev. Hal Sanks, sj, President

Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Kevin O'Neill, Executive Director

Kehilla Community Synagogue
Rabbi Burt Jacobson

Service Employees International Union, Local 790
Josie Mooney, Deputy Director

Mercy Charities Housing
Jane Graf, President

National Lawyers Guild
Riva Enteen, Program Director

Our Lady of Lourdes Church
Rev. Kirk Ullery, pastor

Pace e Bene
Ken Butigan, Coordinator

Saint Teresa's Church
Rev. Peter Sammon, pastor

Saint Boniface Church
Rev. Louis Vitale, ofm, pastor

St. Joseph the Worker Church
Rev. William O'Donnell, pastor

San Francisco Interfaith Council
Rev. Milton Walsh, Chair

San Francisco Labor Council
Walter Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer

San Francisco Network Ministries
Rev. Glenda Hope, Director

S.F. Tenants Union
Ted Gullicksen, Director

Tenderloin Housing Clinic
Randy Shaw, Executive Director